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P.R.P. SHARMA

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For over a millennium, Sankara's Vedanta advaitism: nondualism, has been exposed to extensive discussion, debate, and even polemic. In modern times, it has often been viewed as a system of metaphysical thought, involving a set of several subtle, though interrelated, doctrines—which all have the Upanisads at their base. The book does not just present Vedanta as a system of metaphysical thought. It is essentially an off-beat effort seeking to philosophically analyse the concepts of Atman, Brahman, and the World—which not only count among the fundamental concepts in the philosophic thought of the Upanisads, but also help capture the true meaning, profundity, richness and beauty of Sankara's advaita itself. Also, in the specific contexts of Sankara's philosophy vis-a-vis the Upanisadic texts.

पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल काँगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय, हरिद्वार
विषय संख्या 181.48 SHA-E आगत नं० 144314
लेखक Sharma, P.R.P.
शीर्षक Encyclopaedia of Vedanta.

दिनांक	सदस्य संख्या	दिनांक	सदस्य संख्या

काँगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय, हरिद्वार
पुस्तक के ऊपर कोई निशान आदि न लगायें।

ISBN 978-81-261-3260-7

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वर्ग संख्या...R 181.48 SHA-E... आगत संख्या..144314

पुस्तक विवरण की तिथि नीचे अंकित है। इस तिथि सहित ३० वें दिन यह पुस्तक पुस्तकालय में वापस आ जानी चाहिए अन्यथा ५० पैसे प्रतिदिन के हिसाब से विलम्ब दण्ड लगेगा।

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Encyclopaedia of Vedanta

Dr. P.R.P. Sharma

ANMOL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.
NEW DELHI - 110 002 (INDIA)

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ANMOL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.
H.O.: 4374/4B, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj,
New Delhi-110 002 (India)
Ph.: 23278000, 23261597

B.O.: No. 1015, Ist Main Road, BSK IIIrd Stage
IIIrd Phase, IIIrd Block
Bangalore - 560 085 (India)
Visit us at: www.anmolpublications.com

Encyclopaedia of Vedanta

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First Published, 2007

ISBN 978-81-261-3260-7

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181.48
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PRINTED IN INDIA

Printed at Mehra Offset Press, Delhi.

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PREFACE

"For over a millennium, Sankara's Vedanta advaitism: nondualism, has been exposed to extensive discussion, debate, and even polemic. In modern times, it has often been viewed as a system of metaphysical thought, involving a set of several subtle, though interrelated, doctrines—which all have the Upanisads at their base. But, wittingly or unwittingly, modern theoreticians/scholars tend to gloss over Sankara's acumen as a philosophical analyst—though his interpretations of the Upanisadic writings have indisputably shown his uncommon, rather unrivalled, genius for logic and meticulous philosophical analysis. Professor Ramamurty's work is, thus, a departure from run-of-the-mill studies attempting, as it does, an indepth 'conceptual analysis' of advaita vedanta.

"The book does not just present Vedanta as a system of metaphysical thought. It is essentially an off-beat effort seeking to philosophically analyse the concepts of Atman, Brahman, and the World—which not only count among the fundamental concepts in the philosophic thought of the Upanisads, but also help capture the true meaning, profoundity, richness and beauty of Sankara's advaita itself. Also, in the specific contexts of Sankara's philosophy vis-a-vis the Upanisadic texts.

The novelty of this book consists of the fact that it introduces the reader to the basic tenets of Vedanta in three independent but complementary ways: scripturally, rationally, and experientially. All the three elements are usually found intertwined in accounts of Vedanta. They are presented distinctly here in the hope that each perspective will enrich one's understanding of Vedanta as a whole and also allow the reader to form his or her own opinion about the relative merits of each approach."

—Dr. P.R.P. Sharma

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VEDIC PHILOSOPHY

Vedic Thought

The Wonder of Reincarnation: As a river nears the ocean it looks back at its life. The virgin snows on mountain-tops that gave birth to it. The lake down below which was its nursery. The travel through mountain passes where it met its tributaries and gained adulthood. The solitude and tranquility of the forests, the singing of the birds, the lush green valleys laden with wheat, corn and rice. The adventurous ride through cities, gladly accepting their refuse and sometimes flooding them as if in a fit of anger. Thousands of experiences and hundreds of memories. And now its imminent merger into a bigger entity. Its losing of the shores which defined it and gave it its uniqueness.

Merging into the ocean however is just a brief stopover. The water evaporates leaving behind all its impurities in the ocean, the clouds drop snow on a different mountain-top, the snow melts and water feeds into a different river and keeps the never ending cycle going.

Might nature have fashioned the human life and for that matter every type of life in the same manner? A life force appearing in its mortal form, going through its journey, disappearing into a bigger entity and after being cleansed and rejuvenated, reappearing at a different time and at a different place in a new mortal garb. Does that somehow show us that we should revere the life force within and not indulge in worshipping the external attributes provided to it by Providence? Should this shared life force provide for a common bond between all living beings or should we let ourselves be consumed by our petty differences? And if we choose the latter, would that not be an affront to the very essence of nature?

Self Observation-I: The discovery of self is a must for experiencing depth. It comes by self-observation. The Upanishads describe a simple technique for accomplishing this. They say : deliberately divide your attention at all times so as to direct a portion of it

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back on yourself. Divide you, the 'person' into an 'observing I' and an 'acting or thinking I'. Within the vast array of selves of your personality, establish an awareness that only watches all the rest. By observing yourself you will realize that not YOU but IT speaks within you, moves, feels, laughs, and cries in you. This concept is enumerated in the following Upanishadic sutra:

Two birds, inseparable companions, perch on the same tree.

One eats the fruit, the other looks on.
The first bird is our individual self,
feeding on the pains and pleasures of this world;
The other is the universal Self, silently witnessing all.
The individual self, immersed in the world of change,
deluded, laments its lack of freedom.
But when it discovers God, full of dignity and power,
it is freed from all its suffering.

Our Rishis admonished; 'Be present at every breath. Do not let your attention wander for the duration of a single breath.' Thiourea, a transcendentalist, had this to say about the concept of self-observation: 'I am conscious of the presence of a part of me, which, (as it were,) is not a part of me, but a spectator, sharing no experience, but taking note of it ..... When the play, (it may be the tragedy,) of life is over, the spectator goes his way. It was a kind of fiction, a work of the imagination only, so far as he was concerned.

The hallmark of Socrates philosophy was 'Know thyself'.

Discover and nurture the 'observing I', and you will find yourself to be more in command of your life!

Self Observation-II: The art of self observation is practiced by deliberately dividing your attention at all times so as to direct a portion of it back on yourself. Establishing an awareness which does nothing but observe the different selves of your personality, is by no means an easy task. In the beginning, a person forgets to keep the 'observing I' separate from the 'acting or thinking I'. The 'self observing' entity keeps merging into whichever 'I' has control over the person at a given moment. But with persistence, different identities that a person assumes become apparent to him. Through observing them, these selves lose their hold on the person. The 'self-observing' part of 'I' becomes dominant and the person detaches himself from his other identities. This process culminates in his reaching a 'partially awakened' state.

In this 'partially awakened' state, a person does everything with a feeling of awareness and with a certain degree of control. His actions are not mere automatic responses to different stimuli. A person can see himself with complete objectivity. This results in his being able to make more meaningful choices.

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With continued practice of 'self observation' a person ultimately reaches the highest state-the 'fully awakened' state. In this state a person sees, not only himself but everything around him with full objectivity. The base and meaningless concepts of 'I', 'mine', 'yours' etc. disappear. The constant clamor of the mind is replaced by a sense of serenity. An inner peace prevails and the person becomes 'liberated'.

George I. Gurdjieff, a noted Russian philosopher, who was also a student of Hinduism, found the practice of 'self-observation' to be the starting point of all conscious raising efforts. The concept of 'self-observation' and how to practice it, is the single most revealing gift of the Upanishads.

Self Observation-III: A lot has been written about higher consciousness. It simply means being able to see the things around you, the way they really are, and not have your perception be colored by your personal biases and prejudices. The Upanishadic way to accomplish this is by separating the 'observing I' from the 'acting or thinking I'. A good way to start practicing this technique is to just observe for a few days, your one hand do all it does during your waking hours. Then you can stretch this 'self-observation' to include different parts of your body, ultimately to include your mind. It is a long drawn out process but worth the results it produces.

There are many practical benefits that come from moving your consciousness to a higher level. Extracting and enhancing the 'observing you' from the 'rest of your personality' enables you to 'merely observe your anxieties' rather than be 'part of them'. That is a great way to reduce stress. Self-observation reveals to you how small a portion of your most valuable possession your emotional energy is expended wisely. People normally squander it on a host of utterly futile activities such as anxiety, purely imaginary fears, agitation and anger, and also on maintenance of an exhausting degree of muscle tension. Having discovered how wasteful you are in the use of your nervous energy, you can improve your daily life by using it wisely.

By moving to a higher level of consciousness, you can see things from other people's viewpoint. This gives you an edge in resolving minor disputes before they flare up into full-scale egotistical wars. By conserving your reservoir of emotional energies, by separating your 'self' from 'the crises in your life' and by having your perceptions devoid of any biases, your life becomes a lot simpler. The choices you make in life are more thought out. The mental equilibrium you attain calms you down. It has been said that 'awakening is the evolutionary destiny of mankind'. Why not embark on this journey now?

Man the Ultimate God: Sadhna connotes the successful achieving of a desired end. It is the instrument for the attainment of Siddhi (perfection). The first step in sadhna is the desire for liberation (mumukshutva). Man alone possesses the desire to attain perfection. The gods are already divine and the animal kingdom does not have the desire for perfection. Only man has the conscious urge to expand without limits, to reach out and touch the stars.

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Based on his study of the Hindu scriptures done in India, Troy Organ, a professor of Philosophy at Ohio University, wrote, "Man is a real living, growing entity while god is an ideal being. Man and god are identical in essence, but different in form. Man is real potentiality; god is ideal fulfillment. Man is to be fulfilled as god is fulfilled, but not like god's fulfillment, for god's fulfillment is a static fulfillment — there are no possibilities in gods. Man is to be perfected beyond god, for he is to be perfected in dynamic reality. The attainment of god-realization is not the ideal goal of human life. The Upanishads claim that the Self, the Atman, not god is to be realized. Various gods demythologized are merely the symbols of the full realization of human potentialities."

Self observation leads to awakening. An Awakened man, a man who has pushed himself to the limits of possibilities, one who has achieved perfection in dynamic reality under the constraints of time and space, represents the highest value. That is why the Puranas say that the life of man is desired even by gods of heaven, since it is only through a human incarnation that final liberation can be achieved.

Our purpose on this planet is not just to populate the place and in the words of Gibran, 'to fulfil life's longing for itself', but to awaken and actualize the potentialities present only in man. And when a man attains Siddhi through Sadhna in dynamic reality, he becomes one with Brahman. He becomes the ultimate god.

Human Neurosis: Our desire to understand and rationalize the infinite with a primitive intellect is the most amazing thing about us humans. Science enables us to analyze and validate events happening in the material realm; it lets us observe activities and processes in a controlled environment in a lab, but to extend its application to the spiritual plane is sheer madness. How could one measure the size of something infinite with a finite length of tape? How could eye see the invisible spirit? How could an analytical intellect mired in reasoning, comprehend the divine? It is simply ego driven neurosis that makes a spiritually unhinged person to expect to observe, study and validate spiritual phenomenon with his limited intellect.

Bhakti: When the intellectual curiosity has been satiated, when there are no more questions to be asked, when all the spiritual knowledge catalogued and presented in flowery prose by the learned people has been scanned, dissected and assimilated; without the person being able to still the tidal waves of his psyche, it is then that the mental speculation gives way to the practice of 'Bhakti'. It is then that the intellect surrenders to the divine in a spirit of devotion. It is then that the man's ascent to a spiritual life begins.

A person introduces an element of 'Bhakti' in his life with his very first visit to a temple. When he gets there, the person does not have to recite any prayers, he does not even have to utter a single word, for the Lord can see the devotion in his heart. Just showing up with folded hands and devotion in his heart for a *Darshan*-Darshan, which requires neither prayer nor commitment but rather is an act of being in His presence,

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an act that submerges the self in a striving for the infinite-stills the troubled waves of ones mind. About a visit to the temple, the poet says,

"kahne kee zaroorat nahin, aana hee bahut hai,

is dar pe tera sis jhukana hee bahut hai"

The practice of spirituality through devotion provides the necessary filter which takes the sting out of the harsh realities of human existence and makes life bearable.

Rhythms of Life: Human nature dictates that we find an anchor to build our lives around. In our desperate search we go from door to door, we bounce from person to person and we jump from coattail to coattail to find somethin stable, someone we could depend on, in times of crisis. At times we feel that we have found that person and we latch on to him. When bad times do come around, as they must, we are in a state of disbelief when we find ourselves bereft of the one person we focused our lives on, one person we centered our pride on, one person who was supposed to be our anchor. Suddenly the framework of our existence seems to be receding from us. We are left only with shattered dreams.

A person who lacks a stable anchor cannot maintain equilibrium in the face of adversity. And as we well know, human relations are all transitory. We have to find something more stable, someone who would not disappoint us in times of need. That is why we have to cultivate a consciousness in which the omnipotent Lord is the anchor. The fortieth chapter of the Yajur Ved states that we should build our lives around Him, as He is the only one who is eternal and would stand by us in every adversity. To start with, one could simply visualize the deity of Lord Krishan and chant the Hare Krishan Mahamantar any time he is not mentally occupied with doing something. Over time this could extend to keeping that image of the Lord in the subconscious at all times. When He rules the subconscious mind, the person is surrendered and the rhythms of life are keyed to performing His service. In the Bhagwad Gita (12.8), Lord Krishan says, "Just fix your mind upon Me, and engage all your intelligence in Me. Thus you will live in Me always, without a doubt".

Continued practice in surrendering himself enables a person to develop the consciousness capable of remembering the Lord at the time of final exit. In the Bhagwad Gita (8.5), Lord Krishan says, "Whoever at the end of his life quits his body remembering Me, attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt". Mahatma Gandhi did not suddenly think of invoking the Lord's name by saying *Hey Ram* at the time of his death. He spent his whole life with Him as his anchor. He constantly practiced keeping Him in his subconscious. And so must we....so that our faith becomes a living experience.

Arjun's Paralysis: Many scholars have studied the Bhagwad Gita and tried to provide us with an insight into the teaching of Lord Krishan. Although every chapter of Gita alludes to some aspect of our moral code, the most powerful teaching arises from Arjun's paralysis on the battlefield.

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Arjun's perplexity arises over the question of dharam, which as a warrior, bids him to fight in order to protect the goodness, and as a person, forbids him to kill the members of his own family, his revered teachers and dear friends. Faced with Arjun's renunciation and his inability to wage war, Lord Krishan resolves his dilemma in two parts. He reminds Arjun that: (1) he must observe his dharam and, (2) the soul survives the body. In the first instance He tells Arjun that he must perform his duty, which for a warrior is to fight the evil forces to the very end and preserve goodness. Secondly, one should not worry about death, as the soul can never be slain. Rather it sheds one body at death and takes on a new one, in birth after birth.

Further Lord Krishan says that successive rebirths may be avoided by observing your dharam with complete disregard to the fruits of your action. He exhorts Arjun to hold alike happiness and unhappiness, gain and loss, victory and defeat in pursuit of his dharam. A person need not become an ascetic to achieve liberation, but only renounce the fruits of his action, and perform his duty without caring about the results. Lord Krishan says that your entitlement is only to the action, and not to the fruit it bears.

These are the answers to Arjun's dilemma. But there is another teaching which is of the greatest importance. This is the teaching of devotion to God. Lord Krishan says that he who along with his struggle for survival, also remembers Him and adores Him, is the greatest ascetic.

Steeped in this Hindu philosophy, one overcomes all obstacles in life and leads a peaceful and happy life.

The Yoga of Devotion: In the twelfth chapter of the Bhagwad Gita, Arjun enquires from Lord Krishan about the relative merits of reaching Him through devotional service versus through worshipping the impersonal Brahman, the unmanifested.

Lord Krishan answers, "Those whose minds are fixed on me in steadfast love, worshipping me with absolute faith, I consider them to be most perfect." He further adds, "As for others who worship the unmanifest, indefinable and changeless, that which is omnipresent, constant, eternal and lies beyond the perception of the senses, and they do so by holding all the senses in check, are tranquil minded and devoted to the welfare of humanity, and see the Atman in every creature; they will also come to me."

"But the devotees of the unmanifest have a harder task, because the unmanifest is very difficult for embodied souls to realize."

Bhakti yoga, or the process of reaching Him by being in direct devotional service to the Lord is easier and natural for us humans. The individual soul is embodied since time immemorial, and it is very difficult for a common man to visualize that he is not the body and that the Lord does not have any physical attributes either. In Bhakti yoga, as described in Bhagwad Gita, a person accepts the Deity of Krishan as Brahman with body features and engages himself in devotional service to the Lord. So it becomes a very easy and natural process for him to reach the Supreme Being.

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Janana yoga, or the process of reaching Him through understanding the unmanifested Supreme Being is very difficult. By his very nature, a common man has trouble identifying with the formless Supreme. However, if he is persistent in his quest, he might realize the eternal and attain spiritual realization through the guidance of a highly learned devotee. But the unguided intellectualization of the unmanifest may lead a person to become an atheist. Unfortunately a large percentage of today's intelligensia falls squarely into this category.

Bhakti Yoga, according to the Bhagwad Gita, is the shortest path to spiritual realization.

Modes of Material Nature: The last few chapters of the Bhagwad Gita enumerate the modes of material nature and the characteristics of people living under their influence.

The three modes of material nature are 'sattvaguna' or the mode of goodness, 'rajasguna' or the mode of passion, and 'tamasguna' or the mode of ignorance.

Lord Krishan says, "Sattva rules a person who offers sacrifices in accordance with scriptural instructions and does not covet their fruits. Sattoguni, or a person inspired by sattva is impelled by an inner sense of duty. The performance of sacrifices by a Rajoguni is for the outward show, in the hope of a divine reward and is inspired by rajas. The Tamogunis on the other hand, totally disregard the scriptural instructions and make no offering, no prayer of dedication, no gift to the priest and are devoid of faith."

The Lord further adds, "The austerity of the body comprises of reverence for the gods, brahmins and gurus; uprightness, physical cleanliness and sexual purity and nonviolence. Austerity of speech comprises of speech that does not hurt anyone, is truthful, kind and beneficial, as well as daily recitation of scriptures. The austerity of mind comprises serenity of mind, gentleness, self control and inner purity. The triple austerities practiced with the highest faith and with nary a thought of reward crossing ones mind is the nature of sattva. The austerity undertaken out of self-pride, and in order to gain the reputation and homage attendant on pious acts is of the rajas type. Austerity practiced under some foolish misconceptions, by means of self torture or to hurt another person is of the tamas type."

Clearly a satto-guni will do everything as an offering to God. Any work done in this mode shall be the result of doer's best effort and will be performed with great willpower and determination. The motive for the effort will be something higher than the next paycheck or the next promotion. Internally a person will be all fired up to perform but outwardly he would appear to be calm and unstressed as there is no passion involved in the effort.

The non-attachment to rewards of ones actions is sometimes considered to suggest coldness and lack of enthusiasm. But in reality, one is freed from the fear of failure and the desire of rewards, and offers everything he does as a sacrament of devotion to his duty. Leading ones life as a satto-guni therefore, is the most spiritual and stressfree mode that one should strive to achieve.

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Householder: In the Bhagwad Gita, Lord Krishan says that he who along with his struggle for survival remembers Him and chants His name is the biggest ascetic. He clearly puts a spiritually devoted householder ahead of any other group of people. This is very well illustrated by the following incident.

It is said that once Sage Narad and a common householder entered the court of Lord Krishan almost at the same time. Lord Krishan chose to see the householder first. Now Sage Narad considered himself to be the foremost devotee of the Lord. So being passed up in favor of a common householder really hurt him. So much so that when he had an audience with the Lord, he complained about this incident. The Lord decided to teach the Sage a lesson. He handed him a pot full of 'ghee' and asked him to put it on his head and to go around the world without spilling a drop of it. This, the Sage was able to accomplish without any problem. So when he came back to the Lord after going around the world, the Lord commended him on his feat and asked him as to how many times did he chant His name during the trip.

The Sage said that the Lord must be really joking for he was so busy balancing the pot of ghee that he could not afford to be distracted even for a single instant. Lord Krishan told him that the house holder had to juggle a thousand responsibilities that go with being a father, a husband, a son, a brother, a breadwinner and still found time to chant His name. Sage Narad on the other hand, had only the task of balancing a pot of ghee, and could not find time to chant His name. Therefore the householder was leading a more spiritual life than the Sage. The Sage felt humbled and recognized the greatness of a householder.

Householders are the backbone of the human race. They are the ones who grow the food we eat, design and manufacture consumer goods and appliances needed to make life livable, and provide health care to get us back on our feet when we get sick. They are the ones who contribute most to the material development of society since they have a vested interest in seeing that their children inherit a better world than the one in which they were raised. In short a householder is the most important element of the human race and spiritual householders are the beings most loved by God.

jag to andhakaar hai, is se tu nikal...
gyan kaa prakash kar, mod tu samabhal...
Radha Krishan ke charan main nitya kar naman...
Man to mandir hai.....haridaya hai vrindavan....

Temple Rituals—A Psychological Analysis: A person's quest for spirituality starts simply with his visiting a temple. To facilitate the process of his spiritual growth, some temples require their devotees to adhere to a dress code. The temple walls are decorated with religious symbols and images. The 'puja' itself consists of singing of hymns, bhajans etc. followed by a 'parvachan' or a class on religion/spirituality; with 'Aarti' being the final offering to the gods.

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There is a psychological reasoning behind all this. The dress code, all the temple decorations, the aroma of incense, the fresh flowers, the nicely dressed deities on the alter; are all meant to create an atmosphere conducive to a spiritual experience. They are the first step of a process meant to alter the state of one's mind, to bring it to a state where the internal turmoil subsides for a duration. The spiritual vibrations of the temple atmosphere lift the soul to a level where it becomes capable of connecting with the divinity. It essentially prepares the person for what he has come there for.

In our everyday existence, we hide our innermost feelings and wear a shield against any intruding thoughts. Every bit of information is thoroughly screened by our rational mind before it is accepted or rejected. But if we are to learn anything from a spiritual master, the sieve has to be temporarily put away. Subliminal thoughts have to penetrate the mind in their entirety, without being filtered or diluted in any way.

The second step in creating the proper state of mind is to remove the filter separating the ears from the brain, to give our defense mechanism a rest. This is done by singing bhajans and hymns. The mind, through this exercise gets into a voluntary receptive mode.

It is then, that the brain can be programmed with the noble thoughts-be they to sing the glory of the Lord or ways to deal with our everyday problems in a conscientious manner. A spiritual master can be most successful in the healing process of a mind beset by the badgering of the trivialities of life; he can convey the scriptural philosophy on virtous living, only to a receptive mind. And the mind is made most receptive when its guards are taken down, when it stops fighting the sensory signals coming in, when there are no obstructions between the sensory perceptions and memory cells.

The decoration of the temple with divine symbols and images, the incense, the flowers, enforcing a proper dress code, singing of the hymns and bhajans are all a prelude to the ultimate goal-to submit oneself to the reprogramming of ones brain with the doctrines of noble living.

Renew Thyself: The Vedas say, 'All intelligences awake with the morning.' "Being awake is not just being physically up and around but being men tally vigorous to celebrate another day of living " observed Thiourea, "The millions are awake enough for physical labor; but only one in a million is awake enough for effective intellectual exertion, only one in a hundred million to the poetic or divine life. To be awake is to be alive. I have never yet met a man who was quite awake. How could I have looked him in the face?"

As we grow older, some of us get lost in the monotony of life. We tend to lose our zest for living. As Thiourea observed, "the morning ceases to be the most enjoyable season of the day". We are awakened not by our newly acquired force and aspirations from within but by some electronic gadgets. It is not the undulations of celestial music that wake us up but the prolonged chatter of a radio. And that is very sad; because it signals the decline of our excitement for life.

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To quote Henry David again, "A person who is physically, mentally and spiritually awake in the morning and who keeps pace with the sun; for him the whole day is a perpetual morning. It does not matter what the clock says or what the people around him say, morning is when he is awake and there is dawn in him. And if he can keep the spirit of early morning with him throughout the day, then he has lived through, not a day but a long morning". One must be drunk with living and not ever let himself be resigned to life. If one finds oneself at a dead end, he should develop some new avenues for the release of his creative energies. It does not have to be a money making endeavor. One has to develop a state of mind in which he is alert and buoyant throughout the day and the whole day becomes one long morning.

"Renew thyself completely each day; do it again, and again, and forever again". Keep the spirit of Goddess USHA alive in you.

Be A Light Into Yourself: Hindu religion is based not on believing a certain doctrine or dogma, but in realizing the Divine. It is based not merely on being loyal to a faith but on striving to become one with the infinite. And there is a definite progression that a seeker goes through. A beginner might need symbols or pictures to focus his attention, and to stop his mind from wandering while in prayers. But if he is earnest about his spiritual development, he would soon progress to a stage where he would not need any props for performing his sadhna to reach the infinite. In his quest for the eternal, he would advance from material worship to mental worship and then on to the highest stage where he can realize the divine.

One must not be content with accumulating scriptural knowledge. That is just the beginning of a long journey. The discovery of inwardness is the essential basis of spiritual life. The scriptures could point out the road but each man must travel it for himself. Reading about a past buddha's communion with God is not going to result in your communion. It can excite you and inspire you to have the same experience. But in the end you must travel alone. You must find your own salvation. "For thousands who talk, one can think; for thousands who think, perhaps one sees and understands". Use the talking and thinking stages as stepping stones to rise to the ultimate level of experiencing the Divine.

Those of us who lead outward lives without being touched to our inner depths, do not understand life itself. We believe that we do our duty to religion by accepting the letter of faith and making a token cash donation to the temple of our choice. This results in our spiritual dependence and forces us to accept what others say about the religious truth. But once the individual in his freedom of spirit pursues truth and builds up a center in himself, he has enough strength and stability to deal with all that happens to him. He has the ability to fight back and retain his peace even when he is faced with adverse conditions. Liberation comes by experiencing the truth on your own. It comes not from accumulation of information, but from inner transformation.

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Gautama Buddha said to his disciples, "Be a light unto yourself." Find the truth, build your own light and let it shine your path. Remember, the goal is not to find out how others attained bliss but to use that knowledge to attain it for yourself.

Abhidharma

Buddhism has at its core a psychology little known to the adherents but quite familiar to the Buddhist monks. 'Abhidharma' or the 'ultimate doctrine' has as its basis one of the most systematic psychologies of the world and elaborates Gautama Buddha's penetrating insights into human nature. This is the practical psychology that devotees apply to discipline their minds and hearts in order to attain a more ideal state of being.

According to Abhidharma, the human personality is like a river that keeps a constant form, seemingly a single identity, though not a single drop is the same as a moment ago. Each successive moment of our awareness is shaped by the previous moment, and will in turn determine the following moment. Each mental state is composed of a set of values, called mental factors, that combine to define that mental state. One's mental state at any given moment is a function of the biological and situational influences, in addition to a carryover from the preceding psychological moment.

The mental factors could be healthy ones or unhealthy ones. Good mental health depends on our ability to plant healthy factors in our mind so that they can inhibit and suppress unhealthy factors. The central healthy factor is 'Insight' which implies an ability to 'clearly perceive an object as it really is'. 'Mindfulness' is the 'continued clear comprehension' of an object. The two of them together 'perceive' and 'hold' clarity in one's mind and are sufficient to suppress all unhealthy factors.

The formal Western psychology, which is only about a hundred years old is merely a recent version of the human endeavor undertaken centuries ago in India. Modern psychology has rephrased the Buddhistic philosophy by saying that 'we should balance the negatives in our lives by the positives. We hould try to keep everything under proper perspective. We should remember that what is an obstacle for one person is an opportunity for another; what one man calls a stumbling block is used as a stepping stone by another.'

There is a humorous story which illustrates the concept of keeping a positive attitude. Two hunters were offered a bounty of $5,000 for each wolf that they could trap alive. For days they searched the mountains and forests in their area looking for the elusive prey. Exhausted one night, they fell asleep dreaming of getting rich one day. In the morning, one hunter opened his eyes, only to find that they were surrounded by wolves with flaming eyes and bared teeth. He nudged his friend with great excitement and said, "We are finally rich".

In the history of mankind there have been a few famous people and vast multitudes of ordinary folks, and the true winners among them have been the ones who kept a positive attitude toward life. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "Don't waste yourself in rejection, but

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chant the beauty of the good". Neutralizing the negative thoughts and replacing them with positive thoughts was good advice some 2500 years ago, and it is good advice today. Crush a negative thought today and replace it with a positive one. Experience the peace and happiness that flows from this process. Go ahead, do it now!

Heaven—Where Does it Exist: The concept of a heaven in the hereafter is perhaps as old as the human race itself. But in the entire history of mankind if one looks at the definition of heaven of any culture, of any religion, of any race in an era; one finds that it consists of the things that the people in that group are deprived of, or the things that they really miss in their lives.

They project these things to be present in abundance in 'their heaven'. As an example, the Indian heaven almost invariably has rivers of milk and 'ghee' flowing through it. It is nothing but a longing for three sumptuous meals a day, which lot of people don't get. When there is shortage, even of clean drinking water, you can well under stand why we would imagine heaven to be loaded with food.

The second thing that almost invariably pops up in the definition of heaven is that it is peaceful and tranquil up there. Might that reflect our desire for an end to the hatred that different ethnic and religious groups harbor against each other?

With this thought in mind, should it not be the aim of life to create the conditions of heaven right here on earth? Should we not be working to achieve material and spiritual prosperity in our lives and thereby make the whole concept of heaven in the hereafter obsolete? If we could tame our carvings and make our lives full of joy, we probably would not even accept the concept of heaven, much less long to retire to. And that brings us to the idea of feeling happy with what we have; striving for more but nevertheless being at peace with ourselves.

The Upanishads tell us to think of ourselves as mere users and not owners of our worldly possessions, of our status in the society and of the family we are blessed with. Following this canon just might do the trick and enable us to experience the heaven while we still reside on the mortal shores.

You Belong in the Marketplace: The restless and incessant striving, with joy in the strife, is the greatest happiness that a man can experience in this world. The Isha Upanishad states that one must will himself to live for at least a hundred years and be occupied every minute of it. And the love of strife, the constant meeting of challenges head on, is what gives meaning to life and makes one desirous of living a long life. The poet says, "Zindagi har kadam ek nayee jung hai" (life is a struggle at every step of the way).

There are days when a person gets up and feels like crawling right back into the bed. For some people such days out-number the times when they are excited about another day of living. They hope to strike it rich one day through winning a lottery or through inheritance and then be able to live happily ever after without having to struggle every

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day to make a living. They somehow give up on life. Again the poet says, "Hai zindagi bhee maut jo himmat ko haren hain" (people who have lost the courage to fight are the living dead) A person who gives up the struggle, also loses his will to live on. For him the aspirations of youth end up in the disillusions of old age.

Whatever be your vocation or your hobby, you belong in the hustle and bustle of the marketplace. You belong where action is, because that is what sustains life. Designing new gadgets and fixing the old ones, treating and nursing sick people, being engaged in spiritual activities, making business deals, acquiring and disseminating knowledge, creating art and music, doing volunteer work, being engrossed in leisure activities is what you should be occupied with. As water retains its clarity only when it flows in a stream and becomes muddy and stale when it loses its flow; So does life lose its meaning when there is no struggle, no battles to fight and no excitement to keep the will to live strong. A person stays tuned up and razor sharp by being in the markeet place.

It is the struggle, and not the goal that brings salvation to the soul. The moment of man's greatest happiness is the moment of striving for others. And to make his strife more meaningful, man must over soar his own little self, and must join with others in some united effort for the greater good of humanity. Above all he must stay involved.

Death Penalty: Every time the state executes a convicted criminal, the debate over capital punishment resurfaces. The collective moral conscience of the society, which decides the fate of these individuals is largely shaped by our religious beliefs. What does our belief system dictate? Consider the following two scenarios from our scriptures:

1. In Mahabharat, at one stage in the great battle of Kurukheshter, Arjun was pitted against Karan. During this fateful fight, one wheel of Karan's chariot got stuck in the bloody mire of the ground. As he descended to make his chariot mobile again he requested Arjun to hold his arrows while he attended to his chariot. That was a reasonable request as per the norms of war fare in that age. But Shri Krishan urged Arjun to continue the fight. Arjun paused and hesitated since he did not want to take advantage of this awkward situation, but Shri Krishan once again exhorted him to continue fighting and to kill Karan. At this Arjun shot an arrow on his bow Gandiva, which cut off Karan's head.
2. In Ramayan, Lord Shiva is said to have bestowed a special protective power on the evil king Bali. Under the umbrella of this protective power, no one could defeat him in a fair fight. As per the norms of the day, for a fight to be fair the two dueling opponents had to fight face to face. No sneak attacks were permitted. Even though Bali was bitterly detested by his subjects, yet no one could penetrate his protective shield in a fair fight and dispose him off. It was with this dilemma that Bali's brother Sugreev enlisted Shri Ram's help. Upon hearing the facts, Shri Ram did not hesitate in setting aside the rules of fair play and killed Bali with an arrow shot from behind a tree. There are several other instances in our scriptures in

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which even God Himself, in His different human incarnations bent the rules of fair play in order to get rid of evil. All these instances seem to point in the same direction, that is, 'Fight an evil per son to the end and take advantage of his every weakness to annihilate him. Show no mercy and even suspend the code of honor temporarily, to deal with the situation.' Can this code be extrapolated to mean that our scriptures endorse death penalty? You be the judge.

To Pray or Not to Pray: Secularists point to the rivalries between different religions as a proof of the futility of religion. Scientists question the very existence of God. Common logic dictates that when you pray, there is no one out there listening to you. The words you utter during your prayers just get lost in thin air. Religious people insist on the existence of God. So who is right, and who is wrong? Who can provide an answer to this dilemma about the very existence of God and about the need for prayers in our daily lives?

Psychologists seem to have a valid explanation. They think that self-talk is the way to propel yourself in a certain direction. For example when you repeatedly tell yourself that you need a new car, you subconsciously program your brain into working in that direction. Once the idea gets firmly implanted, your brain implores you to start looking for ways to finance your purchase. It might take the shape of another part time job. Or it might result in bigger savings from your present income. Whatever the mode your brain directs you to accumulate enough funds for your desired acquisitions.

People have been known to recover from near fatal diseases like cancer by asserting their willingness to live on. By their selftalk they were able to persuade their brain to manufacture and release the drugs required to kill the organisms attacking their bodies. Granted that it does not happen in every case. But people have been known to have willed themselves few extra years after the medical profession had given up on them. In each of these cases, the will to live on, the self-talk to program their brain into fighting their malady played an important part in their healing process.

Psychologists liken prayer to self-talk. They think that the self-talk programs our brain which in turn directs our actions towards achieving our desired goals. Priests on the other hand, look at it from a religious point of view and insist that God does listen to our prayers and grants us that; which we are worthy of. Whichever point of view you may agree with the one put forth by the psychologists or the one put forth by the priests the final conclusion is the same. Prayers are a very important part of our daily lives.

In the words of late Dr. Radhakrishnan, "When in the sorrow of death or the suffering of despair, when trust is betrayed or love desecrated, when life becomes tasteless and meaningless, man stretches forth his hands to heaven to know if perchance there is an answering presence behind the dark clouds; it is then that he comes into touch with the supreme in the solitude of his consciousness, in the realm of the profound and intense. It is the world of light and love in which there is no language but that of silence. It is the world of joy that reveals itself in innumerable forms." Must we wait for moments of

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despair before we acknowledge His presence? Must we be driven to total defeat before we surrender? Must we feel helpless before we start to pray?

Synchronicity: A friend of mine, Mr. S. had gone to Calcutta to look for a bride. While in India, he happened to travel to Bombay. There, in a store Mr. S met Mrs. M who was also visiting from the U.S. and had been looking for a husband for her younger sister Miss P. Mrs. M invited Mr. S to her parents' house. The next day Mr. S and his parents went to meet his prospective bride and her family and the rest, as they say is history. This is a true story which happened in the early seventies.

The pleasant ending of this story was the culmination of a series of coincidences. Mr. S and Mrs. M visiting India at the same time, Mr. S travelling to Bombay, his chance encounter with Mrs. M in a store, leading to his marriage to Miss P. To us Hindus, it was fate, divine intervention or simply a matter of Sanjog. Our philosophic thought teaches us about the acceptance of life as it unfolds because we believe that the Supreme Power has a hand in everything that happens to us.

In the West, the concept of Sanjog, until recently had been an alien idea. But psychoanalyst Carl Jung was fascinated by his study of this phenomenon in which two events take place at the same time with neither one causing the other to hap pen, and yet they are related to one another in a meaningful way. He coined a new name for it - Synchronicity. Thus was another ancient Hindu tenet blessed by the scientific West. It is not looked at any more as just another happening based on statistical probability.

The coming together by apparent chance, of factors that are not causally linked but that nevertheless show themselves to be meaningfully related is at the very heart of the process by which the purpose of an individual's life unfolds and becomes his "fate". Call it Sanjog or Synchronicity, it all happens through Divine Intervention.

Our Collective Heritage: As children we are introduced to one of the many creeds of our Hindu religion-Sanatan Dharam, Jainism, Arya Samaj, Vedantism, Shivaism-or one of the many other creeds on the horizon. From then on we develop a religious complexion which stays with us for the rest of our lives. When we want more light, we read only one set of religious books to the total exclusion of others, lest by accident we get more light than we want.

A beam of white light passing through a prism splits up into a rainbow of colors. We select one of these colors, say the red one, and look at life under the red light. In our ignorance we refuse to look at life under the illumination of the blue light or the green light or the yellow light. We miss out on experiencing the true picture. Our shallow thinking prevents us from learning about the goodness in other creeds.

We are the descendents of the mighty Arjun, the sublime Krishan and the noble Ram. The teachings of Shankaracharya, Swami Dayanand, Guru Nanak, Buddh, Mahavir, Ramkrishan etc. are the collective heritage of all Hindus. There is no need to shut any one of them out. No matter what his religion is, the experience of every mystic is the same.

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And these mystics have left us with many powerful thoughts to ponder over and to illuminate our lives with.

As we celebrate India's Independence Day (or should we call it India's Freedom Day, as we never did depend on the colonial powers for our survival), let us celebrate our collective heritage and not be blinded by the monochromatic lights of different shades of Hinduism. Happy 15th folks!

Conformity: From day one of his life, there is an attempt to shape every man into a common mold. The society, the school system and even the family demands conformity. But when you buckle under and become part of a herd, you lose your uniqueness. You give up your convictions and passions in favor of being accepted by the crowd. You become a mere actor playing different roles — role of a dutiful child, of a dutiful parent or of a dutiful spouse.

Strive to find your own voice and do it now, because the longer you wait to begin the less likely you are to find it at all.

Psychoanalyst Erich Fromm wrote, "Man by origin is a herd animal. His actions are determined by an instinctive impulse to follow the leader and to have close contact with other animals around him. Inasmuch as we are sheep, there is no greater threat to our existence than to lose this contact with the herd and be isolated. But we are also human; we are endowed with reason which by its very nature is independent of the herd. Rationalization is a compromise between our sheep nature and our human capacity to think. And the full emergence of reason depends on our attaining independence so that our judgement is not based on our fear of being isolated from the herd. A few individuals can stand this isolation and say the truth in spite of the danger of losing touch. They are the true heroes of the human race but for whom we would still be living in caves."

Submission to a powerful authority gives a feeling of protection and belonging, but you lose your independence. Dare to strike out and find new ground. Be your own person. Look at things in a way different from the one you were trained to do. Don't be afraid of isolation. Resist the pressure to conform. If you don't, the casualty could be your heart and soul.

On Flying a Kite: This is the kite flying season in Southern California. You can see the little ones in school parks struggling to get their kites up in the air. Erma Bombeck writes that kite flying is a lot like raising children. You spend what feels like a lifetime, getting them off the ground. You run with them until you are both breath less . . . they crash. You add a little longer tail and try again . . . they hit a tree. You rescue them, comfort them, fix them up with a couple of band-aids and try to get them up again. You watch them as they get lifted by the wind and finally become airborne. What a thrill it is to see them soar. Then they need more string and you keep unrolling your ball of twine. As the kite flies higher and higher, there is sadness mixed with joyful emotions. Deep inside you know that the beautiful kite of yours is going to get tangled with another kite

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and disappear into to the sunset. It will no longer need the lifeline that you so lovingly provided. And you feel the gratification by knowing that you did your job.

Too often when our children are little, we don't spend enough time with them. We are too busy doing our own things — having a busy social life, trying to make our first million or working to gain social prominence. We grow apart. Then one day, they are old enough to take care of themselves and don't need us anymore. We wake up, sometimes too late to enjoy them. And that is very sad. Because the joy that they provide, the vitality they infuse in their aging caretakers is overwhelming.

They make us feel young again. Don't miss out on bonding with your adorable kites. Hold them and hug them and be part of their little games. Spend some quality time with the precious little angels. They are so much a reflection of you when you were little. You would have enough time to do your own things later on. After all they are going to be around only for about eighteen years before they get shipped off to some university.

Mark Twain on 'What is Man': Man, according to Mark Twain is a mere machine. 'What so ever he is, is due to his make, and the influences brought to bear upon him by his heredities, his habitat and his associations.' Further more, 'From cradle to the grave a man never does a single thing which has any FIRST AND FOREMOST object but one-to secure peace of mind and spiritual comfort for HIMSELF.' Mark Twain claims that every man acts per his make.

Men are born with some hereditary traits-gifts and shortcomings-and they act according to these traits. Just as a sewing machine made from different grades of steel or from different metals will perform differently, so would a tin man, a gold man or a steel man act according to the nature of his make. His make however is influenced by his training and his environment.

In one of his fables he says, 'A man is waiting at a bus station to reach home in the middle of a storm. A gray-haired ragged old homeless woman approaches him and requests for help. He ponders over for a few seconds and gives her his last dollar. He then walks home in the middle of a storm. On the way home his heart is singing with joy because he did something good. When he reaches home he proudly recounts his tale of charity and earns the respect and affection of his family. He has a hearty dinner and sleeps well that night, knowing how benevolent he has been to the old lady.

That is a very good return on an investment of one dollar.' Mark Twain concludes that earning his personal self-approval, securing his peace of mind and his desire to earn the affection of his family and to feel good about himself were the motivations that drove this man to help the old lady. Whatever he did was a result of his make, his training and above all an attempt to buy peace of mind for himself. There were no favors done. Noble, Generous, Benevolent etc. are merely undeserving labels that men bestow upon each other.

It sure is a different point of view, which makes you stop and think!

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Vedas and Philosophy

The Vedas are the most ancient books in the World, and they are the Foundation of Hinduism. Veda means knowledge. Any form of Knowledge acquired is considered as a Veda whereby it has no beginning or end. While it might surprise people how a book can have no beginning or end, the ancient Rishis who wrote these accepted that the complete knowledge of the Universe could never fit in any book, so there would always be new things to discover. This philosophy makes Hinduism a very tolerant religion, always ready to accept new ideas from other cultures.

The Vedas were compiled by the great sage Krishna Dwipayana during the Dwapara Yuga with the goal to come up with a de-facto standard of education. Upon gathering all the teachings passed on from the Acharyas (Teachers) to their Sishyas (Students) from Kingdom to Kingdom, he compiled them into 4 standard structures; the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda. Upon completion of this great feat he was given the title "Veda Vyasa" which means "Compiler of the Vedas".

The Vedas are considered Shruti (or Sruti), or revealed texts. They were not given by a prophet, but heard by many different Rishis (or very advanced Yogis) during deep meditation. These verses were combined and written in the Vedas in poetic form.

The Vedas are not Polytheistic. Dr. David Frawley, in his book "Wisdom of the Ancient Seers" mentions "The Gods, though they have a human facet, are not anthropomorphic. The Gods represent not the Divine in the image of Man, but rather man in the image of Divine, in the image of all creation."

Regarding the charge of Pantheism, he says in the same book "The natural imagery of the ancients reflects not the Divine reduced to natural world but the natural world as a reflection of the inner truth".

So Agni, the God of Fire, is not normal fire, but the fire of transformation. He burns our inner demons, and lights the way to Enlightenment. Soma, the God of Wine, is the Divine bliss we feel when reach the Divine, and feel him in all creation. Saraswati is not a river or Goddess of a River, but rather the River of Divine knowledge that continuously flows from heaven. When the Demons block this river and the Gods fight them, it is not a literal battle, but a figurative one when the Divine qualities inherent in Man fight the Demons of ignorance.

Organization: The Mantras are collected into anthologies called Samhitas. There are four Samhitas: the *Rk* (poetry), *Sman* (song), *Yajus* (prayer), and *Atharvan* (a kind of priest). They are commonly referred to as the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda respectively. Each Samhita is preserved in a number of versions or recensions (shakhas), the differences among them being minor, except in the case of the Yajur Veda, where two "White" (*shukla*) recensions contain the Mantras only, while four "Black" (*krishna*) recensions interspersed the Brahmana parts among the Mantras.

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The Rigveda contains the oldest part of the corpus, and consists of 1028 hymns. The Samaveda is mostly a rearrangement of the Rigveda for musical rendering. The Yajurveda gives sacrificial prayers and the Atharvaveda gives charms, incantations and magical formulae. In addition to these there are some stray secular material, such as legends.

The next category of texts are the Brahmanas. These are ritual texts that describe in detail the sacrifices in which the Mantras were to be used, as well as comment on the meaning of the sacrificial ritual. Each of the Brahmanas is associated with one of the Samhitas. The Brahmanas may either form separate texts, or in the case of the Black Yajur Veda, can be partly integrated into the text of the Samhita. The most important of the Brahmanas is the Shatapatha Brahmana of the White Yajur Veda.

The Aranyakas and Upanishads are theological and philosophical works. They are mystic or spiritual interpretations of the Vedas, and are considered their putative end and essence, and thus known as Vedanta ("the end of the Vedas"). They often form part of the Brahmanas (e.g. the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad). They are the basis of the Vedanta school of Darsana.

Position and Compilation: Hindu tradition regards the Vedas as uncreated, eternal and being revealed to sages (Rishis). The rishi Krishna Dwaipayana, better known as Veda Vyasa – "Vyasa" meaning "editor" or "compiler" – reputedly distributed this mass of hymns into the four books of the Vedas, each book being supervised by one of his disciples. Paila arranged the hymns of the *Rig Veda*. Those that were chanted during religious and social ceremonies were compiled by Vaishampayana under the title *Yajus mantra Samhita* (see Yajur-Veda). Jaimini is said to have collected hymns that were set to music and melody—"Saman" (see Sama-Veda). The fourth collection of hymns and chants known as the *Atharva Samhita* was collated by Sumanta.

Philosophies and sects that developed in the Indian subcontinent have taken differing positions on the Vedas. In Buddhism and Jainism, the authority of the Veda is repudiated, and both evolved into separate religions. The sects which did not explicitly reject the Vedas remained followers of the Sanatana Dharma, which is known in modern times as Hinduism.

Study: Elaborate methods for preserving the text (memorizing by heart instead of writing), subsidiary disciplines (Vedanga), exegetical literature, etc., were developed in the Vedic schools. Sayana, from the 14th century, is known for his elaborate commentaries on the Vedic texts. While much evidence suggests that everyone was equally allowed to study the Vedas and many Vedic "authors" were women, the later dharmashastras, from the Sutra age, dictate that women and Shudras were neither required nor allowed to study the Veda.

These dharmashastras regard the study of the Vedas a religious duty of the three upper varnas (Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas). In modern times, Vedic studies are crucial in the understanding of Indo-European linguistics, as well as ancient Indian history.

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Many forms of Hinduism encourage the Vedic mantras to be interpreted as liberally and as philosophically as possible, unlike the texts of the three Abrahamic religions. In fact, over-literal interpretation of the mantras is actually discouraged, and even the three layers of commentaries (Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads), which form an integral part of the Sruti literature, interpret the seemingly polytheistic, ritualistic, and highly complex Samhitas in a philosophical and metaphorical way to explain the "hidden" concepts of God (Ishwara), the Supreme Being (Brahman) and the soul or the self (Atman). Many Hindus believe that the very sound of the Vedic mantras is purifying for the environment and the human mind.

Cosmogony: The Vedic view of the world and cosmogony sees one true divine principle self-projecting as the divine word, *Vaak*, 'birthing' the cosmos that we know from 'Hiranyagarbha' or Golden Womb, a primordial sun figure that is equivalent to Surya. The varied gods like Vayu, Indra, Rudra (the Destroyer), Agni (Fire, the sacrificial medium) and the goddess Saraswati (the Divine Word, aka Vaak) are just some examples of the myriad aspects of the one underlying nature of the universe.

Dating: Many historians regard the Vedas as one of the oldest surviving texts (see the ancient Egyptian texts "The Story of Sinuhe" and the "Ipuwer Papyrus", both dated 1800 BCE). The newest parts of the Vedas are estimated to date to around 500 BC; the oldest text (Rig Veda) is found to have been completed by 1500 BC after being composed over hundreds of years, but most Indologists agree that a long oral tradition possibly existed before it was written down. They represent the oldest stratum of Indian literature and according to modern scholars are written in forms of a language which evolved into Sanskrit. They consider the use of Vedic Sanskrit for the language of the texts an anachronism, although it is generally accepted.

Some writers have used astronomical references in the Rigveda to date it to as early as the 4th millennium BC.

The Hindus fundamental belief is that the Vedas are sanatan-eternal- and apaurusheya not composed by human entity. At the beginning of every cosmic cycle of brahma, Paramatma utters the divine words. Later, at various periods great rishis perceive these divine words and imparted this knowledge orally through generations. It is believed that this Vedic knowledge totally disappeared at the end of Brahmas cosmic cycle and reappeared again in Brahma's next cycle of creation. Later a part of vedic knowledge was written. Maha Rishi Veda Vyas simplified this one Veda by dividing it into four: Rig, Sam, Yajur, Atharva. In Bharatvarshas true tradition the vedas are eternal.

Etymology: The word "veda" means "knowledge", and is derived from the root "vid-", Sanskrit for "know", reconstructed as being derived from the Proto-Indo-European root "weid-", meaning "see" or "know". "Weid-" is also the source of the English word "wit", as well as "vision" through Latin. The Czech and Slovak words for "science" are "vda" resp. "veda", derived from western Slavic "vdet" resp. "vediee" for "know".

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Derivation from the Vedas-Upavedas

The Upavedas are derived from the Vedas and are specific applications of the teachings of the Vedas. The main Upavedas are:

1. *Ayurveda:* Indias healing system, it lays more stress on living with nature instead of fighting it, hence preventive instead of corrective medicine.
2. *Dhanur Veda:* Martial arts.

   Ayurveda and Dhanurveda have points in common. They both work with Marma, or natural Pran (Life Energy) that flows in the body. Ayruveda heals the body, while Dhanurveda is used for killing. This concept is also known to Chinese as Acupuncture and related Chinese Martial Arts.
3. *Stahapatya Veda:* Architecture, sculpture and geomancy. Used especially for Temple design.
4. *Gandharv Veda:* Music, poetry and dance.

Some other fields like Jyotish (Indian Astrology), Tantra (based on the Puranas, which are in turn based on Vedas), Shiksha and Vyakara (Grammar and pronunciation) are also based on the Vedas.

The six schools of Vedic Philosophy

1. *Nyaya:* The Logical School, founded by Gautama
2. *Vaishesika:* Atomic school, founded by Kannada
3. *Samkhya:* Cosmic Principle School, founded by Kapila
4. *Yoga:* Yoga school (includes Raj, Hatha and Tantra Yoga), founded by Hiranyagarbha, although Patanjalis Sutras are the most popular book that has survived.
5. *Purva Mimamsa:* Ritualistic School, founded by Jamini
6. *Uttara Mimasa/Vedant:* Theological School, founded by Badarayana.

Vedanta was made popular by Adi Shankara also called Shankaracharya, who founded the Swami Order of Monks, and established 4 schools (or Maths) in 4 parts of India to carry on teachings of the Vedas in the 7th century.

Yoga is not just Asanas as Westerners see it, but a complete system of God Realisation. For more details see Wikipedia page on Yoga.

The Hidden Meaning of the Vedas: The Vedas were written in poetic language. By literally translating them, Western translators lost some of the poetic beauty. Their interpretations of the shastras are often shallow. Plus, they had to force meanings where there were none. Words like Pantheism, Polytheism are used to describe Hinduism, but this shows the translators ignorance or bias.

One of the best commentaries to Vedas is written by Sri Aurobindo. Rig Veda is considered by many to be a book written by barbaric culture worshipping violent Gods.

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Aurobindo realized that this was due to the biased view of Westerners who had some preconceived views on Hindu culture.

So Aurobindo decided to look for hidden meanings in the Vedas. He looked at the Rig Veda as a psychological book, inspiring the people to move towards God, but in a hidden language. So Indra is the God of Indriya, or the senses (sight, touch, hear, taste etc.). Varun means air, but in esoteric terms means Pran, or the Life force. So when the Rig Vedas says "Call Indra and Varun to drink Soma Rasa" they mean use the Mind senses and Pran to receive divine bliss (Soma means wine of Gods, but in several texts also means Divine Bliss, as in Right handed Tantra).

Agni, or God of Fire, is the hidden Divine Spark in us, which we have to fan, so it grows and engulfs our whole body. So the sacrifice of the Vedas actually means sacrificing ones ego to the internal Agni, or Divine spark.

These essays originally appeared in the Arya, but have been condensed as a book form as "The Secret of the Vedas" by Sri Aurobindo.

Westerners and Vedas: The Vedas are hidden in mystic language. The Rishis hid 3-4 esoteric meanings within each verse, and it required a good Guru to explain them.

One of the few Westerners to study the Vedas with an Indian Guru is Dr. David Frawley. In his excellent book "Wisdom of the Ancient Seers" he explores ideas similar to one by Sri Aurobindo.

He describes Indra as a brave soul, willing to fight evil and darkness. He is the inner Spirit, wanting to break free from the fake shackles of ego.

Frawley, who also studied Ayurveda and Tantra, says Agni also refers to Kundalini, and Soma Rasa to the Sahasra Chakra and the bliss that flows from it. Savitur is the Sun that shines in the darkness of ignorance, and guides us towards the Truth.

Samhita

The Samhita (Sanskrit: "joined" or "collected") is the basic text of each of the Vedas, comprising collections of hymns and ritual texts. This term was originally used in reference to the style of recitation used during hymns and chants. In the Vedas the Samhitas are supplemented by later explanatory commentaries, notably the Brahmanas and Upanishads.

The term is also sometimes spelled 'Sanhita'.

Other Samhitas: In later times, the term Samhita also came to be applied to the names of texts belonging to various fields of knowledge, not directly connected to the Vedas. e.g.

- Gherand Samhita
- Charak Samhita
- Ashtavakra Samhita

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Gherand Samhita: Gheranda Samhita (Sanskrit for "Gheranda's Collection") is one of the three classic texts of Hatha Yoga (the other two being the Hatha Yoga Pradapika and the Shiva Samhita). It is a late 17th Century text and is considered to be the most encyclopedic of the three classic texts on Hatha Yoga.

Gheranda Samhita is a manual of Yoga taught by Gheranda to Chanda. Unlike other Hatha Yoga texts, the Gheranda Samhita focuses upon the *Shat Kriyas* or internal body cleansing, i.e., *Ghatastha Yoga*. The closing stanzas of the Gheranda Samhita deal with Samadhi, but the methods taught are different from Patanjali's methods.

Charaka: Charaka, sometimes spelled Caraka, (300 BC) is one of the founders of Ayurveda. According to Charaka, health and disease are not predetermined and life may be prolonged by human effort.

Contributions: According to the Charaka tradition, there existed six schools of medicine, founded by the disciples of the sage Punarvasutreya. Each of his disciples, Agnivesha, Bhela, Jatkkarna, Parshara, Hrita, and Kshrapni, composed a Samhit. Of these, the one composed by Agnivesha was supposed to be the best. The Agnivesha Samhit was later revised by Charaka and it came to be known as Charaka Samhit. The Charaka Samhit was revised by Dridhbala.

Yurveda is traditionally divided into eight branches which, in Charaka's scheme, are:

1. sktra-sthna, general principles
2. nidna-sthna, pathology
3. vimna-sthna, diagnostics
4. shamrasthna, physiology and anatomy
5. indriya-sthna, prognosis
6. chikits-sthna, therapeutics
7. kalpa-sthna, pharmacy
8. siddhi-sthna, successful treatment

Form of Charak Samhita: Charak Samhita contains 120 adhyayas (chapters) in all. These are devided in 8 parts:

1. Sutra sthana 30
2. Nidan sthana 08
3. Viman sthana 08
4. sharir sthana 08
5. Indriya sthana 12
6. Chikitsa sthana 30
7. Kalpa sthana 12
8. Siddhi sthana 12

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Ashtavakra Gita

The Ashtavakra Gita (Song of Ashtavakra), also known by the name Ashtavakra Samhita is an influential non-dualist Vedic scripture traditionally said to have been spoken by the Sage Ashtavakra, though its authorship is not known with certainty.

There is little doubt though that it is very old, probably dating back to the days of the classic Vedanta period. The Sanskrit style and the doctrine expressed would seem to warrant this assessment.

The work was known, appreciated and quoted by Ramakrishna and his disciple Vivekananda, as well as by Ramana Maharshi. Radhakrishnan refers to it with great respect, while even Sri Ravi Shankar has given a commentary on the scripture. Apart from that, the work speaks for itself. It presents the traditional teachings of Advaita Vedanta with a clarity and power very rarely matched.

The *Ashtavakra Gita* does not date itself or brand itself to any region, culture, or peoples, although it does contain Hindu-specific references, especially in the final chapter entitled 'I am Shiva' where it is proclaimed in the final verse that the author is in truth one with God. The essence of the *Ashtavakra Gita* is that there is no such thing as existence or non existence, right or wrong, or moral or immoral. In the eyes of the sage Ashtavakra who is the ostensible author of this text, one's true identity can be found by simply recognizing oneself as Pure Existence and that as individuals we are the Awareness of all things.

The Ashtavakra Gita teaches that one is already free once one realises they are free. It advocates non-action (similar to the Daoist concept of Wu Wei), the loss of desire and severing of worldly attachments. To free oneself from the cycle of life and death one should withdraw from all Earthly desires, worries and cares. To continue including in Earthly things even after one has realized their true nature is said to be foolish and time wasting. Instead it paints a picture of The Master as someone who continues to keep up their responsibilities in the world, not because they believe they have to or due to any worldy attachments, but simply that it is in their nature to do so. It is important to avoid misinterpretation in this regard, and to that end teachers traditionally recommend that Ashtavakra Gita be pursued by only those who have already advanced on the spiritual path. Ashtavakra teaches that emotion, thought and even meditation can lead to further bondage and that religious practice itself is of no meaning to the enlightened.

Rigveda

The Rigveda consists of 1,028 hymns (or 1,017 discounting the apocryphal *valakhalya* hymns 8.49–8.59) composed in Vedic Sanskrit, many of which are intended for various sacrificial rituals. This long collection of short hymns is mostly devoted to the praise of the gods. It is organized into 10 books, known as Mandalas. Each mandala is comprised of hymns, called *skkta*, which are further comprised of individual. The Mandalas are by

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no means of equal length or age: The "family books", mandalas 2-7, are considered the oldest part and comprise the shortest books, arranged by length, accounting for 38% of the text. RV 8 and RV 9, likely comprising hymns of mixed age, account for 15% and 9%, respectively. RV 1 and RV 10, finally, are both the youngest and the longest books, accounting for 37% of the text.

Preservation: The *Rigveda* is preserved by two major shakhas ("branches", i.e. schools or recensions), *Zkala* and *Bckala*. Considering its great age, the text is spectacularly well preserved and uncorrupted, the two recensions being practically identical, so that scholarly editions can mostly do without a critical apparatus. Associated to *Zkala* is the Aitareya-Brahmana. The *Bckala* includes the Khilani and has the Kausitaki-Brahmana associated to it.

This compilation or redaction included the arrangement in books as well as orthoepic changes, such as regularization of sandhi (called by Oldenberg *orthoepische Diaskeunase*). It took place centuries after the composition of the earliest hymns, about coeval to the redaction of the other Vedas.

From the time of its redaction, the text has been handed down in two versions: The *Samhitapatha* has all Sanskrit rules of sandhi applied and is the text used for recitation. The Padapatha has each word isolated in its pausa form and is used for memorization. The Padapatha is, as it were, a commentary to the *Samhitapatha*, but the two seem to be about coeval. The original text as reconstructed on metrical grounds (viz. "original" in the sense that it aims to recover the hymns as composed by the Rishis) lies somewhere between the two, but closer to the Samhitapatha.

Organization: Hermann Grassmann has though numbered the hymns 1 through to 1028, putting the *valakhilya* at the end. The entire 1028 hymns of the *Rigveda*, in the 1877 edition of Aufrecht, contain a total of 10,552 verses, or 39,831 padas. The Shatapatha Brahmana gives the number of syllables to be 432,000, while the metrical text of van Nooten and Holland (1994) has a total of 395,563 syllables (or an average of 9.93 syllables per pada); counting the number of syllables is not straightforward because of issues with sandhi. Most verses are jagati (padas of 12 syllables), trishtubh (padas of 11 syllables), viraj (padas of 10 syllables) or gayatri or anushtubh (padas of 8 syllables).

The chief gods of the *Rigveda* are Agni, the sacrificial fire, Indra, a heroic god who is praised for having slain his enemy Vrtra, and Soma, the sacred potion, or the plant it is made from. Other prominent gods are Mitra, Varuna and Ushas (the dawn) and the Ashvins. Also invoked are Savitar, Vishnu, Rudra, Pushan, Brihaspati, Brahmanaspati, Dyaus Pita (the sky), Prithivi (the earth), Surya (the sun), Vayu (the wind), Apas (the waters), Parjanya (the rain), Vac (the word), the Maruts, the Adityas, the Rebus, the Vishvadevas (the all-gods), many rivers (notably the Sapta Sindhu, and the Sarasvati River), as well as various further minor gods, persons, concepts, phenomena and items. It also contains fragmentary references to possible historical events, notably the struggle

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between the early Vedic people (known as Vedic Aryans, a subgroup of the Indo-Aryans) and their enemies, the Dasa.

Rigveda manuscript in Devanagari, early 19th century

- Mandala 1 comprises 191 hymns. Hymn 1.1 is addressed to Agni, and his name is the first word of the *Rigveda*. The remaining hymns are mainly addressed to Agni and Indra. Hymns 1.154 to 1.156 are addressed to Vishnu.
- Mandala 2 comprises 43 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra. It is chiefly attributed to the Rishi *gitsamda saunohotra*.
- Mandala 3 comprises 62 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra. The verse 3.62.10 has great importance in Hinduism as the Gayatri Mantra. Most hymns in this book are attributed to *visvmitra gthinas*.
- Mandala 4 consists of 58 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra. Most hymns in this book are attributed to *vmadeva gautama*.
- Mandala 5 comprises 87 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra, the Visvadevas, the Maruts, the twin-deity Mitra-Varuna and the Asvins. Two hymns each are dedicated to Ushas (the dawn) and to Savitar. Most hymns in this book are attributed to the *atri* family.
- Mandala 6 comprises 75 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra. Most hymns in this book are attributed to the *brhaspatya* family of Angirasas.
- Mandala 7 comprises 104 hymns, to Agni, Indra, the Visvadevas, the Maruts, Mitra-Varuna, the Asvins, Ushas, Indra-Varuna, Varuna, Vayu (the wind), two each to Sarasvati and Vishnu, and to others. Most hymns in this book are attributed to *vasicmha maitravaurni*.
- Mandala 8 comprises 103 hymns to different gods. Hymns 8.49 to 8.59 are the apocryphal *valakhalya*. Most hymns in this book are attributed to the *kyva* family.
- Mandala 9 comprises 114 hymns, entirely devoted to Soma *Pavamana*, the plant of the sacred potion of the Vedic religion.
- Mandala 10 comprises 191 hymns, to Agni and other gods. It contains the Nadistuti sukta which is in praise of rivers and is important for the reconstruction of the geography of the Vedic civilization and the Purusha sukta which has significance in Hindu tradition. It also contains the Nasadiya sukta (10.129), probably the most celebrated hymns in the west, which deals with creation.

Rishis: Each hymn of the Rigveda is traditionally attributed to a specific rishi, and the "family books" (2-7) are said to have been composed by one family of rishis each. The main families, listed by the number of verses ascribed to them are:

- Angirasas: 3619 (especially Mandala 6)
- Kanvas: 1315 (especially Mandala 8)
- Vasishthas: 1267 (Mandala 7)

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- Vaishvamitras: 983 (Mandala 3)
- Atris: 885 (Mandala 5)
- Bhrgus: 473
- Kashyapas: 415 (part of Mandala 9)
- Grtsamadas: 401 (Mandala 2)
- Agastyas: 316
- Bharatas: 170

The *Rigveda* was translated into English by Ralph T.H. Griffith in 1896. Partial English translations by Maurice Bloomfield and William Dwight Whitney exist. Griffith's translation is good, considering its age, but it is no replacement for Geldner's 1951 translation (in German), the only independent scholarly translation so far. The later translations by Elizarenkova depends heavily on Geldner, but Elizarenkova's translation (in Russian) is valuable in taking into account scholarly literature up to 1990.

Hindu Tradition: According to Indian tradition, the Rigvedic hymns were collected by Paila under the guidance of Vysa, who formed the Rigveda Samhita as we know it. According to the Zatapatha Brhmana, the number of syllables in the *Rigveda* is 432,000, equalling the number of muhurtas (1 day = 30 muhurtas) in forty years. This statement stresses the underlying philosophy of the Vedic books that there is a connection (bandhu) between the astronomical, the physiological, and the spiritual.

The authors of the Brhmana literature described and interpreted the Rigvedic ritual. Yaska was an early commentator of the *Rigveda*. In the 14th century, Syana wrote an exhaustive commentary on it. Other *Bhacyas* (commentaries) that have been preserved up to present times are those by Madhava, Skacdasvmin and Veckatamdhava.

Dating and Historical Reconstruction: Geography of the Rigveda, with river names; the extent of the Swat and Cemetery H cultures are also indicated.

The *Rigveda* is far more archaic than any other Indo-Aryan text. For this reason, it was in the center of attention of western scholarship from the times of Max Muller. The *Rigveda* records an early stage of Vedic religion, still closely tied to the pre-Zoroastrian Persian religion. It is thought that Zoroastrianism and Vedic Hinduism evolved from an earlier common religious Indo-Iranian culture.

The Rigveda's core is accepted to date to the late Bronze Age, making it the only example of Bronze Age literature with an unbroken tradition. Its composition is usually dated to roughly between 1700–1100 BC. The text in the following centuries underwent pronunciation revisions and standardization (samhitapatha, padapatha). This redaction would have been completed in about the 7th century BC. Writing appears in India in ca. the 5th century BC in the form of the Brahmi script, but texts of the length of the Rigveda were likely not written down before the Early Middle Ages, in the Gupta or Siddham scripts, and while written manuscripts were used for teaching in medieval times,

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they played a minor role in the preservation of knowledge because of their ephemeral nature (Indian manuscripts were on bark or palm leaves and decomposed rapidly in the tropical climate) until the advent of the printing press in British India. The hymns were thus preserved by oral tradition for up to a millennium from the time of their composition until the redaction of the Rigveda, and the entire Rigveda was preserved in shakhas for another 2,500 years from the time of its redaction until the *editio princeps* by Muller, a collective feat of memorization unparalleled in any other known society.

Puranic literature names Vidagdha as the author of the Pada-text. Other scholars argue that Sthavira Sak of the Aitareya Aranyaka is the padakara of the RV. After their composition, the texts were preserved and codified by a vast body of Vedic priesthood as the central philosophy of the Iron Age Vedic civilization.

The *Rigveda* describes a mobile, nomadic culture, with horse-drawn chariots and metal (bronze) weapons. According to some scholars the geography described is consistent with that of the Punjab (Gandhara): Rivers flow north to south, the mountains are relatively remote but still reachable (Soma is a plant found in the mountains, and it has to be purchased, imported by merchants). Nevertheless, the hymns were certainly composed over a long period, with the oldest elements possibly reaching back into Indo-Iranian times, or the early 2nd millennium BC.

Thus there is some debate over whether the boasts of the destruction of stone forts by the Vedic Aryans and particularly by Indra refer to cities of the Indus Valley civilization or whether they hark back to clashes between the early Indo-Aryans with the BMAC (Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex) culture centuries earlier, in what is now northern Afghanistan and southern Turkmenistan (separated from the upper Indus by the Hindu Kush mountain range, and some 400 km distant). In any case, while it is highly likely that the bulk of the *Rigveda* was composed in the Punjab, even if based on earlier poetic traditions, there is no mention of either tigers or rice in the *Rigveda* (as opposed to the later Vedas), suggesting that Vedic culture only penetrated into the plains of India after its completion.

Similarly, it is assumed that there is no mention of iron. The Iron Age in northern India begins in the 12th century BC with the Black and Red Ware (BRW) culture. This is a widely accepted timeframe for the beginning codification of the *Rigveda* (i.e. the arrangement of the individual hymns in books, and the fixing of the samhitapatha (by applying Sandhi) and the padapatha (by dissolving Sandhi) out of the earlier metrical text), and the composition of the younger Vedas. This time probably coincides with the early Kuru kingdom, shifting the center of Vedic culture east from the Punjab into what is now Uttar Pradesh.

Some of the names of gods and goddesses found in the *Rigveda* are found amongst other belief systems based on Proto-Indo-European religion as well: Dyaus-Pita is cognate with Greek Zeus, Latin Jupiter (from deuspater), and Germanic Tyr; while Mitra is

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cognate with Persian *Mithra*; also, Ushas with Greek Eos and Latin Aurora; and, less certainly, Varuna with Greek Uranos. Finally, Agni is cognate with Latin *ignis* and Russian *ogon*, both meaning "fire".

Some writers have traced astronomical references in the *Rigveda* dating it to as early as 4000 BC , a date well within the Indian Neolithic. Claims of such evidence remain controversial.

Kazanas (2000) in a polemic against the "Aryan Invasion Theory" suggests a date as early as 3100 BC, based on an identification of the early Rigvedic Sarasvati River as the Ghaggar-Hakra and on glottochronological arguments. Being a polemic against mainstream scholarship, this is of course in diametral opposition to views in mainstream historical linguistics, which assumes a date as late as 3000 BC for the age of late Proto-Indo-European itself.

Flora and Fauna in the Rigveda: The horse (Asva) and cattle play an important role in the Rigveda. There are also references to the elephant (Hastin, Varana), Camel (Ustra, especially in Mandala 8), Buffalo (Mahisa), lion (Simha) and to the Gaur in the Rigveda. The peafowl (Mayura) and the Chakravaka (Anas casarca) are birds mentioned in the Rigveda.

More Recent Indian Views: The Hindu perception of the *Rigveda* has moved away from the original ritualistic content to a more symbolic or mystical interpretation. For example, instances of animal sacrifice are not seen as literal slaughtering but as transcendental processes. The Rigvedic view is seen to consider the universe to be infinite in size, dividing knowledge into two categories: *lower* (related to objects, beset with paradoxes) and *higher* (related to the perceiving subject, free of paradoxes). Swami Dayananda, who started the Arya Samaj and Sri Aurobindo have emphasized a spiritual (adhyatimic) interpretation of the book.

The Sarasvati river, lauded in RV 7.95 as the greatest river flowing from the mountain to the sea is sometimes equated with the Ghaggar-Hakra river, which went dry perhaps before 2600 BC or certainly before 1900 BC. Others argue that the Sarasvati was originally the Helmand in Afghanistan. These questions are tied to the debate about the Indo-Aryan migration (termed "Aryan Invasion Theory") vs. the claim that Vedic culture together with Vedic Sanskrit originated in the Indus Valley Civilization, a topic of great significance in Hindu nationalism, addressed for example by Amal Kiran and Shrikant G. Talageri. Subhash Kak has claimed that there is an astronomical code in the organization of the hymns.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, also based on astronomical alignments in the Rigveda, in his "The Orion" (1893) claimed presence of the Rigvedic culture in India in the 4th millennium BC, and in his "Arctic Home in the Vedas" (1903) even argued that the Aryans originated near the North Pole and came south during the Ice Age.

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Samaveda

The Samaveda is third in the usual order of enumeration of the four Vedas, the ancient core Hindu scriptures. The Samaveda ranks next in sanctity and liturgical importance to the Rigveda or Veda of Recited praise. Its Sanhita, or metrical portion, consists chiefly of hymns to be chanted by the Udgatar priests at the performance of those important sacrifices in which the juice of the Soma plant, clarified and mixed with milk and other ingredients, was offered in libation to various deities. The Sama Veda was compiled around 1300-1000 BC.

The Collection is made up of hymns, portions of hymns, and detached verses, taken mainly from the Rigveda, transposed and rearranged, without reference to their original order, to suit the religious ceremonies in which they were to be employed. The verses are not intended to be chanted, but to be sung in specifically indicated melodies using the seven *svaras* or notes. Such songs are called Samagana and in this sense the Samaveda is really a book of hymns.

In these compiled hymns there are frequent variations, of more or less importance, from the text of the Rigveda as we now possess it which variations, although in some cases they are apparently explanatory, seem in others to be older and more original than the readings of the Rigveda. In singing, the verses are still further altered by prolongation, repetition and insertion of syllables, and various modulations, rests, and other modifications prescribed, for the guidance of the officiating priests, in the Ganas or Song-books.

Two of these manuals, the Gramageyagana, or Congregational, and the Aranyagana or Forest Song-Book, follow the order of the verses of part I, of the Sanhita, and two others, the Uhagana, the Uhyagana, of Part II. This part is less disjointed than part I, and is generally arranged in triplets whose first verse is often the repetition of a verse that has occurred in part I.

The Samaveda survives in a single shakha or recension, the Kauthuma shakha, with a second shakha, Jaiminiya (or Talavakara), surviving fragmentarily, the Jaiminiya Samhita. From the Jaiminiya shakha, we also have the Jaiminiya Brahmana, the Jaiminiya Upanishad Brahmana and the Kena Upanishad.

Yajurveda

The Yajurveda is one of the four Hindu Vedas. It contains religious texts focusing on liturgy, rituals and sacrifices, and how to perform the same. The Yajurveda was probably written around 900 BCE.

Collections: There are two primary collections or *samhitas* of the Yajurveda: Shukla (white) and Krishna (black). Both contain the verses necessary for rituals, but the Krishna Yajurveda has additional prose commentary and detailed instructions within the work itself.

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Krishna Yajurveda: There are four recensions of the Krishna ("black" or "dark") Yajurveda:

- *taittiraya sachita* (TS) of Panchala
- *maitrayani sachita* (MS)
- *caraka-katha sachita* (KS) of Madra
- *kapicmhala-katha sachita* (KapS) of Bahika

Each of the recensions has a Brahmana associated with it, and some of them also have associated Shrautasutras, Grhyasutras, Aranyakas, Upanishads and Pratishakhyas.

The best known of these recensions is the TS, named after Tittiri, a pupil of Yaska. It consists of 8 books or *kandas*, subdivided in chapters or *prapathakas*, further subdivided into individual hymns. Some individual hymns in this Samhita have gained particular importance in Hinduism; e.g. TS 4.5 and TS 4.7 constitute the Shri Rudram Chamakam, while 1.8.6.1 is the Shaivaite Tryambakam mantra. The formula *bhkr bhuvas, suvas* prefixed to the (rigvedic) Gayatri mantra is also from the Yajurveda, appearing four times.

The Taittiriya Shakha: The Taittiriya Shakha (or branch) of the Krishna Yajur Veda is the *shakha* most prevalent in southern India. Among the followers of this Shakha, the Apastamba Sutras is the common Shrautasutra associated with the Shakha. The Taittiriya Shakha consists of Taittiriya Samhita (having seven kaandas), Taittiriya Braahmana (having three kaandas), Taittiriya Aaranyaka (having seven prashnas) (See Aranyaka Literature), Taittiriya Upanishad (having three *prashnas* or *vallis*-Sheeksha valli, Ananda valli and Bhrigu valli) and the Mahaanaarayana Upanishad.

The Taittiriya Upanishad and Mahaanaarayana Upanishad are considered to be the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth prashnas of the Aaranyaka. The words *prapaathaka* and *kaanda* (meaning sections) are interchangeably used in the Vedic literature. *Prashna* and *valli* refer to sections of the Aaranyaka.

Shukla Yajurveda: There are two shakhas or recensions of the Shukla ("white" or "bright") Yajurveda:

- *Vajasaneyi Madhyandiniya*
- *Vajasaneyi Kanva* of Kosala

The former is popular in North India and Orissa, and thus commands a numerous following. The Kanva Shakha is popular in Karnataka, Kerala Andhrapradesh and Tamil Nadu. Jagadguru Adi Shankara is said to have followed the Kanva *Shakha* (recension). The Vedic rituals of the Ranganathaswamy Temple at Srirangam, the biggest temple in India, are performed according to the latter *Shakha*.

Kanva matha the only mutt formed on the basis of Veda known as Veda matha was established by saint Madhava thirtha during 1898 who got sanyasa ashrama by sri lakshmi manohara thirtha of sirur math of Udupi one of the ashtamata established by sage Madhvacharya to conduct pooja kainkaryas to lord Udupi Krishna the Kanva matha

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has its headquarter at Hunasihole at Gulbarga district of Karnataka state with sri sri Vidyabhaskara thirtha swamiji as its head now.

The Shukla Yajur Veda has two Upanishads associated with it: the Isa Vasya and the Brihadaranyaka upanishads. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is the most voluminous of all Upanishads.

Legend: Legend has it that the vedic seer Yajnavalkya studied the Yajurveda collections under the tutelage of sage Vaishampayana maternal uncle of Yajnavalkya. Yajnavalkya's birth was with a purpose as purported by Gods. He was an 'Ekasandhigraahi' meaning he learns with just once teaching it self, he was too intelligent. The two came to have serious differences in interpretation. On one occasion, Vaishampayana was so enraged that he demanded the return of all the knowledge he has imparted to Yajnavalkya. Yagnavalkya regurgitated all the knowledge he had learnt in the form of flesh.

The other disciples of Vaishampayana assumed the form of *tittiriya* birds and ate that flesh, eager to receive the knowledge. Thus, that knowledge came to be called the Taittiriya Samhita (from the word *tittiriya*). There is a very secret meaning in this. As we know; it is impossible to regurgiate a knowledge or learning. But the words are used in 'srimad bhaagavata'.

It is also of interest to know why the Guru him self did not taught the vedas he tought to yaajnyavalkya instead asked his disciples to eat the feelings. Any way, after having regurgitated out the knowledge acquired from his teacher, Yajnavalkya worshipped Surya (the Sun God) and acquired new knowledge directly from God Narayana (suryantargata narayana) who preached Shukla yajurveda by taking vaaji rupa, (god with horse face) which was compiled to become the *Shukla Yajurveda, this* is recorded in srimad bhaagavata. (haya, vaaji, ashwa, turaga are names referring horse in different lokaas)

Atharvaveda

The Atharvaveda is a sacred text of Hinduism, and one of the four Vedas, often called the "fourth Veda". According to tradition, the Atharvaveda was mainly composed by two groups of rishis known as the Bhrigus and the Angirasas. Additionally, traditions ascribes parts to other rishis, such as Kauyka, Vaycmha and Kacyapa. There are two surviving recensions (lkhs), known as Zaunakiya (AVS) and Paippalda (AVP). The fixation of the samhita texts of these recensions likely dates to roughly 600 BC (the "Mantra" period of Vedic Sanskrit, and the following codification in Vedic shakhas).

Status: The Atharvaveda, while undoubtedly belonging to the core Vedic corpus, in some ways represents an independent parallel tradition to that of the Rigveda and Yajurveda.

The Jaina and Buddha texts are considerably more hostile to the AV (they call it Aggvna or Ahavna Veda) than they are to the other Hindu texts. They even call it a non-Aryan Veda concocted by paippalda for human sacrifices. The Hindu texts too have taken

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a less than charitable view and have on occasions omitted the reference to the "Atharvn" text in the context of Vedic literature, though some attribute this to the fact that the Atharvaveda was a later addition chronologically. The Atharvan Pariththas (appendices) themselves state that specific priests of the Mauda and Jalada schools should be avoided. It is even stated that women associated with Atharvn may suffer from abortions.

Recensions: The *Cara Gavyuha* (attributed to Shaunaka) lists nine shakhas or Schools of the Atharvaveda:

1. paippalda
2. stauda
3. mauda
4. aunakiya
5. jjala
6. jalada
7. brahmavada
8. devadara
9. chraGavidy

Of these, only the Zaunakiya (AVS) and the Paippalda (AVP) recensions have survived. The core Paippalda text is considered earlier than the Zaunakiya, but both also contain later additions and corruptions. In places where the Zaunakiya and the Paippalda agree, it is likely the original version. Often, the two recensions in corresponding hymns have a different verse order, or either has additional verses missing from the other.

Additionally, from the Visnu and Vyu Puranas (older Hindu texts on the gods, goddesses and their histories) it may be possible to glean a few more ancient schools that were not listed in the *Cara Gavyuha*.

These are:

- sumantu
- kabandha
- kumuda
- aulkyana
- babhravya
- munjakea
- saindhavyana
- nakatrakalpa
- ntikalpa
- sachitvidhi

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At least some of these may have evolved into the other schools mentioned in the Cara Gavyuha list. Sachitvidhi, Zntikalpa and Nakatrakalpa are the five *kalpa* texts adduced to the Zaunakiya tradition and not separate schools of their own.

There are two main circum-vedic texts associated with the AV, the vaitna sktra and the kauika sktra. These serve the same purpose as the vidhna of the Rigveda and are of greater value in studying the Puranic-Vedic link than the AV text itself. There are several Upanishads that are associated with the AV, but appear to be relatively late additions to the tradition. The most important amongst these are the munaka and the pracna Upanishads . The former contains an important reference to Zaunaka, the founder of the Shaunakiya shakha, the latter one is associated with the Paippalda shakha.

Issues of Note

- The AV is the first Indic text dealing with medicine. It identifies the causes of disease as living causative agents such as the yatudhnya, the kimidi, the kimi and the duryama. The atharvns seek to kill them with a variety of drugs in order to counter the disease. This approach to disease is surprisingly advanced compared to the trimanual theory developed in the puranic era. Remnants of the original atharvnic thought did persist in the puranic era as can be seen in sucruta's medical treatise garu.
- Here following the atharvn theory the puranic text suggests germs as a cause for leprosy. In the same chapter sucruta also expands on the role of helminths in disease. These two can be directly traced back to the AV sachita. The hymn AVI. 23-24 describes the disease leprosy and recommends the rajaniaucadhi for its treatment. From the description of the aucadhi as black branching entity with dusky patches, it is very likely that is a lichen with antibiotic properties. Thus the AV can stake the claim for being one of the earliest texts to record uses of the antibiotic agents.
- The AV also informs us about warfare. A variety of devices such as the an arrow with a duct for poison (apskambha) and castor bean poison, poisoned net and hook traps, use of disease spreading bugs and smoke screens find a place in the AV sachita (eg. hymns IX .9, IX. 10, the triacdi and nyrbudi hymns). These references to military practices and associated katriya rites were what gave the AV its formidable reputation. In the Mahabharata era that shortly followed after the end of the atharvn period there is a frequent comparison between weapons and the mantras of the heroes. Probably, this comparison was initially supposed to mean the application of deadly weapons as mentioned in the atharvn tradition.
- Several regular and special rituals of the Aryans are a major concern of the AV, just as in the three other vedas. The major rituals covered by the AV are marriage in kc.

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- There are also hymns that are specific to rituals of the bhigu-agnirasas, vaiyas and katriyas. One of the most important of these rites is the Vishsahi Vrata, performed to invoke the Indra and Visnu with the mantras of the XVIIth kc.
- The Vatya rituals were performed by individuals who took on a nomadic ascetic way of living and were generally sent into neighboring states by the ruler of a particular state. They appear to have served a role in reconnaissance and negotiations with neighboring states (compare with Arjuna's Vatya-like journey into the Yadu principality to woo Subhadra). Finally, there are some rituals aimed at the destruction of the enemies (Abhichrika hymns and rites) particularly using the closing mantras of the XVIth kc.
- While these support traditional negative views on the AV, in content they are mirrored by several other hymns from the Rig as well as the Yajuces. Moreover, Abhichrika rites were an integral part of the vedic as amply attested in the brhmana literature.
- Thus the AV as such began fully within the classic vedic fold, though it was more specific to certain clans of fire priests. The development of the Abhichrika rites to their more 'modern' form was seen only in the vidhna literature and in fact began within the Rigvedic tradition in the form of the aigvidhna. The author of the aigvidhna provides passing reference to the development of similar rites in the AV tradition (the references to the Agnirasa Kritys). These rites reached their culmination in the Kauaika and Vaitana Sktra and in some of the Pariaiahthas (appendices) of the atharvn literature. However, these are far removed from the actual hymns themselves suggesting that they represent an encrustation on the atharvanic practice rather than its original form. While in its most extreme form Atharvanic Abhichrika faded away, it did seed the mainstream Hindu culture resulting in the origin of the Puranic form of the fire ritual (yagas). It also provided the launching pad for the worship of late evolving popular deities like Kumara and Ganapati to capture the mainstream Hindu ritual.

Philosophical Excursions: The AV made the most important contributions to Aryan philosophical thought of all the Sachits. One of the most spectacular expressions of this is seen in the hymn XIII, the Hymn to goddess Earth or the Prithvi Skktam used in the Aghryana rite. The foundations of Vaiceaik, the highest of the Hindu Darmanas is expressed in the mantra XII. 1. 26 in which the atoms (Pmsu) are described forming the stone, the stones agglutinating to form the rocks and the rocks held together to form the Earth. An early pantheistic thought (somewhat convergent to the latter day Viciathadvaitins) is seen in the hymn X.7 that describes the common thread running through all manifest and unmanifest existence as the skacbha. This skacbha is described as what poured out of the Hiranya Garbha, that was the precursor of the complex world in a very simple form (X.7.28). (*Hiranya Garba)* The radiant or golden egg or womb. Esoterically the luminous 'fire mist' or ethereal stuff from which the Universe was formed.")

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This Skambha is Indra and Indra is the Skambha which describes all existence. The hymn also describes a pantheistic nature of the Vedic gods (X.7.38): skacbha is the heat that spreads through the universe (Bhkvana) as waves of water; the units of this spreading entity are the gods even as branches of one tree. This one theme that repeatedly presents itself in various interpretations that abounded in later Hindu philosophies and can be considered one of the most fundamental expression of Vedic thought.

Dating: From alleged internal astronomical references (AVS XI.7), it has been surmised that the Atharvanic period included the time when the Pleiades occupied the spring equinox (roughly 2200 BC). Further, tradition suggests that paippalda, one of the early collators, and Vaidharbh, one of the late contributors associated with the Atharvanic text, lived during the reign of prince Hiranyanabha of the Ikshvku dynasty, interpreted to mean that the core AV composition was at least complete by 1500 BC.

While these approaches are not widely accepted as valid, it is clear that the core text of the AV is not particularly recent in the Vedic Sachit tradition, and falls within the classical *Mantra period* of Vedic Sanskrit in the late 2nd millennium BC-roughly contemporary with the Yajurveda mantras, the Rigvedic Khilani, and the redaction of the Samveda.

The Atharvaveda is also the first Indic text to mention Iron (as ayma ayas, literally "black metal"), so that scholarly consensus dates the bulk of the Atharvaveda hymns to the early Indian Iron Age, corresponding to the 12th to 10th centuries BC or the early Kuru kingdom.

During its oral tradition, however, the text has been corrupted by later additions considerably more than the other Vedas, and it is only from comparative philology of the two surviving recensions that the original reading may hoped to be approximated.

The Brahamans

The Brahmanas are part of the Hindu Shruti; They are composed in Vedic Sanskrit, and the period of their composition is sometimes referred to as the Brahmanic period or age (approximately between 900 BC and 500 BC). They are essentially commentaries of the Vedas, explaining Vedic ritual. The earliest Brahmanas may have been written several centuries earlier, contemporary to the Black Yajurveda commentary prose, but they have only survived in fragments.

Each Brahmana is associated with one of the four Vedas, and within the tradition of that Veda with a particular shakha or school:

Rigveda

- Shakala shakha: Aitareya Brahmana (AB)
- Bashkala shakha: Kaushitaki Brahmana (KS)

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Samaveda

- Kauthuma: PB, Sadyb
- Jayminiya: Jayminiya Brahmana (JB)

Yajurveda

- Krishna: the Brahmanas are integrated into the samhitas:
- Maitrayani (MS)
- Charakakatha (CS)
- Kapisthalakatha (KS)
- Taittiriya (TS). The Taittiriya school has an additional Taittiriya Brahmana (TB)

Shukla

- Vajasaneyi Madhyandina: Shatapatha Brahmana, Madhyadina recension (ShB)
- Kanva: Shatapatha Brahmana, Kanva recension (ShBK)

Atharvaveda

- Paippalada: Gopatha Brahmana

Aranyakas

The Aranyakas are part of the Hindu sruti; these religious scriptures are sometimes argued to be part of either the Brahmanas or Upanishads. The name translates to "the forest books", meaning, treatises for hermits or sadhus living in the wilderness. This contrasts with the grhyasutras, treatises intended for domestic life. Their language is early Classical Sanskrit, and together with the bulk of the Upanishads, the Aranyakas form the basis of Vedanta, roughly dating to a few centuries on either side of the beginning of the Common Era.

The Aranyakas discuss philosophy and sacrifice. They are believed to have originated with the various mystical ascetic groups that developed in post-Vedic India. The Aranyakas constitute a more philosophical and mystical interpretation of the themes presented in the Vedas, as opposed to the Brahmanas, which were primarily concerned with the proper performance of ritual. Like the Upanishads, the Aranyakas may have initially constituted a secret or hidden teaching, not in the sense of being forbidden or restricted, but rather being both a non-obvious expansion on the themes of the Vedas and a teaching that was primarily conveyed individually from teacher to student.

The Aranyakas are associated with and named after individual Vedic shakhas.

- Aitareya Aranyaka
- Taittiriya Aranyaka
- Katha Aranyaka
- Kaushitaki Aranyaka

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The Upnishad

The Upanishads are part of the Hindu *Shruti* scriptures which primarily discuss meditation and philosophy and are seen as religious instructions by most forms of Hinduism. The very edifice of Indian religions (Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism) is built on the strong foundation of the Upanishads.

The Upanishads are mystic or spiritual contemplations of the Vedas, their putative end and essence, and thus known as *Vednta* ("the end of the Vedas"). The Sanskrit term *upanisad* derives from *upa-* (near), *ni-* (down) and *sad* (to sit), i.e. referring to the "sitting down near" a spiritual teacher (guru) in order to receive instruction in the Guru-shishya tradition or parampara. The teachers and students appear in a variety of settings (husband answering questions about immortality, a teenage boy being taught by Yama, etc.). Sometimes the sages are women and at times the instructions (or rather inspiration) are sought by kings. Most disciples are men, but not always. A woman disciple, Gargi Vacaknavi, drove the eminent sage Yajnavalkya to fury with her persistent unanswerable questions. The Upanishads have been dated to around 4th century BC. The oldest upanishads, i.e. the brihadaranyaka and chandogya upanishad, have been dated much older around the vedic period.

The Major Upanishads: Different Upanishads are formally affiliated with the four Vedas (Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda). The Upanishads were transmitted orally by the schools of Vedic recitation sakhas. The longest and oldest Upanishad are the Bahadranyaka and the Chndogya.

The language of the Upanishads is Sanskrit, the oldest among them still classifying as late Vedic Sanskrit. The oldest Upanishads, the Bahadranyakas and the Chndogya are composed in prose. These early texts may date back to the 8th-7th centuries BCE. Later followed a series of Upanishads composed in verse, such as the Katha, and bvetcvatara Upanishads.

Reputedly, there were over two hundred *Upanishads*, but the philosopher and commentator Shankara only composed commentaries to eleven of them. The Upanishads commented on by Shankara are generally regarded as the oldest ones. The Muktika Upanishad lists 108 Upanishads. In 1656, at the order of Dara Shikoh, the Upanishads were translated from Sanskrit into Persian.

These philosophical and meditative tracts form the backbone of Hindu thought. Of the early Upanishads, the Aitareya and Kausitki belong to the Rig Veda, Kena and Chndogya to the Samaveda, and Bwhadrasyaka to the Yajurveda, and Pracna and Mundaka to the Atharvaveda. (Associated Upanishad and Vedic book information taken from Radhakrishnan Indian Philosophy, Vol. 1.) In addition, the Mundukya, Katho, bvetcvatara are very important. Others also include Mahnryana and Maitreyi Upanishads as key.

Place in the Hindu Canon: Scholarly breakdowns of the Vedic books see the four Vedas as poetic liturgy, collectively called mantra or samhit, adoration and supplication

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to the deities of Vedic religion, in parts already sort of melded with monist and henotheist notions, and an over arching order that transcended even the Gods.

The *Brahmana* were a collection of ritual instructions, books detailing the priestly functions (which first were available to all men, and so concretized into strictly Brahmin privilege). These came after the Mantra.

In Vedanta, we have the *Aranyakas* and Upanishads. The Aranyaka ("of the forest") detail meditative yogic practices, contemplations of the mystic one and the manifold manifested principles. The Upanishad basically realized all the monist and universal mystical ideas that started in earlier Vedic hymns, and have exerted an influence unprecedented on the rest of Hindu and Indian philosophy. However, by adherents they are not considered philosophy alone, and form meditations and practical teachings for those advanced enough to benefit from their wisdom.

The Taittiriya Upanishad says this in the Ninth Chapter:

> He who knows the Bliss of *Brahman*, whence words together with the mind turn away, unable to reach It? He is not afraid of anything whatsoever. He does not distress himself with the thought: "Why did I not do what is good? Why did I do what is evil?". Whosoever knows this regards both these as Atman; indeed he cherishes both these as Atman. Such, indeed, is the Upanishad, the secret knowledge of Brahman.

The Upanishads hold information on basic Hindu beliefs, including belief in a world soul, a universal spirit, Brahman, and an individual soul, Atman (Smith 10). A variety of lesser gods are seen as aspects of this one divine ground, Brahman (different from Brahma). Brahman is the ultimate, both transcendent and immanent, the absolute infinite existence, the sum total of all that ever is, was, or ever shall be.

For Advaita philosophers Brahman is not a God in the monotheistic sense, as they do not ascribe to it any limiting characteristics, not even those of being and non-being, and this is reflected in the fact that in Sanskrit, the word brahman has no gender (masculine or feminine or neuter). Dvaita philosophy holds that Brahman is ultimately a personal God, Vishnu, or Krishna (*brahmano hi pratisthaham*, Bhagavad Gita 14.27).

"Who is the Knower?" "What makes my mind think?" "Does life have a purpose, or is it governed by chance?" "What is the cause of the Cosmos?" The sages of the Upanishad try to solve these mysteries and seek knowledge of a Reality beyond ordinary knowing. They also show a preoccupation with states of consciousness, and observed and analyzed dreams as well as dreamless sleep.

The Philosophy of the Upanishad: Due to their mystical nature and intense philosophical bent that does away with all ritual and completely embraces principals of One Brahman and the inner Atman, the Upanishads have a universal feel that has led to their explication in numerous manners, giving birth to the three schools of Vedanta.

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Vedantin philosopher Adi Shankara summed up all the Upanishad in one phrase and said that in the end, the ultimate, formless, inconceivable Brahman is the same as our soul, Atman. We only have to realize it through discrimination and piercing through Maya.

A distinctive quotation that is indicative of the call to self-realization, one that inspired Somerset Maugham in titling a book he wrote on Christopher Isherwood, is as follows:

Get p! Wake up! Seek the guidance of an
Illumined teacher and realize the Self.
Sharp like a razor's edge is the path,
The sages say, difficult to traverse.

— Death Instructing Nachiketa in the *Katho (Word) Upanishad*

The Upanishads also contain the first and most definitive explications of aum as the divine word, the cosmic vibration that underlies all existence and contains multiple trinities of being and principles subsumed into its One Self. The *Isha* says of the Self (Verses 6, 7 & 8 of Isha Upanishad):

Whoever sees all beings in the soul
and the soul in all beings
does not shrink away from this.
In whom all beings have become one with the knowing soul
what delusion or sorrow is there for the one who sees unity?
It has filled all.
It is radiant, incorporeal, invulnerable,
without tendons, pure, untouched by evil.
Wise, intelligent, encompassing, self-existent,
it organizes objects throughout eternity.

"*Aum Shanti Shanti Shanti*" This, too, is found first in the Upanishads, the call for tranquility, for divine stillness, for Peace everlasting.

Dara Shikoh, the Muslim sufi, and son of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, translated the Upanishads in Persian in order to find in it elements of monotheism that might pave the way for a common mystical language between Islam and Hinduism.

The following is a list of the ten "principal" (mukhya) Upanishads that were commented upon by Shankara, and that are accepted as shruti by all Hindus. They are listed with their associated Veda (Rigveda (ZV), Samaveda (SV), White Yajurveda (ZYV), Black Yajurveda (KYV), Atharvaveda (AV)).

1. Aitareya (ZV)
2. Bahadranyaka (ZYV)

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3. ca (ZYV)
4. Taittiraya (KYV)
5. Kamha (KYV)
6. Chndogya (SV)
7. Kena (SV)
8. Mug
9. aka (AV)
10. MG
11. kkya (AV)
12. Prayna (AV)

The Kauaitki, Zvetavatara and Maitryani Upanishads are sometimes added to extend the canon to 12 or 13. They are also the oldest Upanishads, likely all of them dating to before the Common Era. From linguistic evidence, the oldest among them are likely the Bwhadranyaka and Chndogya Upanishads, belonging to the late Vedic Sanskrit period; the remaining ones are at the transition from Vedic to Classical Sanskrit.

Canon by Vedic Shakha: The older Upanishads are associated with Vedic Charanas (Shakhas or schools). The Aitareya Upanishad with the Shakala shakha, the Kauaitki Upanishad with the Bashakala shakha; the Chndogya Upanishad with the Kauthuma shakha, the Kena Upanishad, and the Jaiminiya Upanishad Brahmana, with the Jaiminiya shakha; the Kamha Upanishad with the Caraka-Katha shakha, the Taittiraya and Zvetavatara with the Taittiriya shakha; the Maitryani Upanishad with the Maitrayani shakha; the Bwhadranyaka and *ca Upanishads with the Vajasaneyi Madhyandina shakha, and the MG.

Kkya and Mug: aka Upanishads with the Shaunaka shakha. Additionally, parts of earlier texts, of Brahmanas or passages of the Vedas themselves, are sometimes considered Upanishads.

The Muktika Canon: The following is a list of the 108 canonical Upanishads of the Advaita school, according to the Muktika Upanishad (number 108), 1:30-39 (which does not list the associated Veda). In this canon,

- 10 Upanicads are associated with the Rigveda and have the Shnti beginning *vanme-manasi*.
- 16 Upanicads are associated with the Samaveda and have the Shnti beginning *pyyantu*.
- 19 Upanicads are associated with the White Yajurveda and have the Shnti beginning *pkrnamada*.
- 32 Upanicads are associated with the Black Yajurveda and have the Shnti beginning *sahanvavatu*.

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- 31 Upanicads are associated with the Atharvaveda and have the Shnti beginning *bhadram-karnebhis*.

The first 10 are grouped as *mukhya* "principal", and are identical to those listed above. 21 are grouped as Smnya Vednta "common Vedanta", 23 as Sannysa, 9 as Shkta, 13 as Vaishnava, 14 as Shaiva and 17 as Yoga Upanishads.

1. "The Inner Ruler"
2. "Who moves the world?"
3. Death as Teacher"
4. "The Breath of Life"
5. Mug
6. "Two modes of Knowing"

7, 8. MG

9. "Consciousness and its phases"
10. "From Food to Joy"
11. "The Microcosm of Man"
12. "Song and Sacrifice"
13. Bahadranyaka (ZYV, Mukhya)
14. Brahma (KYV, Sannyasa)
15. Kaivalya (KYV, Shaiva)
16. Jbla (ZYV, Sannyasa)
17. "The Faces of God"
18. Hassa (ZYV, Yoga)
19. runeya (SV, Sannyasa)
20. Garbha (KYV, Sannyasa)
21. Nryana (KYV, Vaishnava)
22. Paramahacsa (ZYV, Sannyasa)
23. Amatabindu (KYV, Yoga)
24. Amatanda (KYV, Yoga)
25. Zira (AV, Shaiva)
26. Atharvaikha (AV, Shaiva)
27. Maitryani (SV, Sannyasa)
28. Kauaitki (ZV, Samanya)
29. Bwhajjbla (AV, Shaiva)
30. Nasishatpan (AV, Vaishnava)
31. Klgnirudra (KYV, Shaiva)
32. Maitreyi (SV, Sannyasa)

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33. Subla (ZYV, Samanya)
34. Kcurika (KYV, Yoga)
35. Mantrika (ZYV, Samanya)
36. Sarvasra (KYV, Samanya)
37. Nirlamba (ZYV, Samanya)
38. Zukarahasya (KYV, Samanya)
39. Vajraskchi (SV, Samanya)
40. Tejobindu (KYV, Sannyasa)
41. Ndabindu (ZV, Yoga) [1]
42. Dhynabindu (KYV, Yoga)
43. Brahmavidy (KYV, Yoga)
44. Yogatattva (KYV, Yoga)
45. Tmabodha (ZV, Samanya)
46. Parivrt (Nradaparivrjaka) (AV, Sannyasa)
47. Triaikhi (ZYV, Yoga)
48. Sit (AV, Shakta)
49. Yogachk
50. Mani (SV, Yoga)
51. Nirvna (ZV, Sannyasa)
52. Mag
53. Alabrhmana (ZYV, Yoga)
54. Dakcinmkrti (KYV, Shaiva)
55. Zarabha (AV, Shaiva)
56. Skanda (Trip
57. Vibhkmi) (KYV, Samanya)
58. Mahnryana (AV, Vaishnava)
59. Advayatraka (ZYV, Sannyasa)
60. Rmarahasya (AV, Vaishnava)
61. Rmatpani (AV, Vaishnava)
62. Vsudeva (SV, Vaishnava)
63. Mudgala (ZV, Samanya)
64. ZG
65. Ilya (AV, Yoga)
66. Paiegala (ZYV, Samanya)
67. Bhikcu (ZYV, Sannyasa)

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68. Mahad (SV, Samanya)
69. Zriraka (KYV, Samanya)
70. Yogaaikh (KYV Yoga)
71. Turiytita (ZYV, Sannyasa)
72. Sannysa (SV, Sannyasa)
73. Paramaha Csaparivrjaka (AV, Sannyasa)
74. Akcamlika (Mlika) (ZV, Shaiva)
75. Avyakta (SV, Vaishnava)
76. Ekkcara (KYV, Samanya)
77. Annapkrna (AV, Shakta)
78. Skrya (AV, Samanya)
79. Akci (KYV, Samanya)
80. Adhytm (ZYV, Samanya)
81. Kug
82. Ika (SV, Sannyasa)
83. Svitri (SV, Samanya)
84. Tm (AV, Samanya)
85. Paupata (AV, Yoga)
86. Parabrahma (AV, Sannyasa)
87. Avadhkta (KYV, Sannyasa)
88. Devi (AV, Shakta)
89. Tripurtapani (AV, Shakta)
90. Tripura (ZV, Shakta)
91. Kamharudra (KYV, Sannyasa)
92. Bhvana (AV, Shakta)
93. Rudrahadaya (KYV, Shaiva)
94. Yogakun
95. Alini (KYV, Yoga)
96. Bhasma (AV, Shaiva)
97. Rudrkca (SV, Shaiva)
98. Ganapati (AV, Shaiva)
99. Daraana (SV, Yoga)
100. Trasra (ZYV, Vaishnava)
101. Mahvkya (AV, Yoga)
102. Pancabrahma (KYV, Shaiva)

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103. Prngnihotra (KYV, Samanya)
104. Goplatpani (AV, Vaishnava)
105. Kacga (AV, Vaishnava)
106. Yjnavalkya (ZYV, Sannyasa)
107. Varha (KYV, Sannyasa)
108. Zmyyani (ZYV, Sannyasa)
109. Hayagriva (AV, Vaishnava)
110. Datttreya (AV, Vaishnava)
111. Gru
112. A (AV, Vaishnava)
113. Kali-Sagmrana (Kali) (KYV, Vaishnava)
114. Jbla (SV, Shaiva)
115. Saubhgya (ZV, Shakta)
116. Sarasvatirahasya (KYV, Shakta)
117. Bahvaca (ZV, Shakta)
118. Muktika (ZYV, Samanya)

Smirti

Smriti refers to a specific body of Hindu religious scripture. *Smriti* also denotes non-*Shruti* texts generally, seen as secondary in authority to *Shruti*.

Categorization: Classifying the Smriti has been a contentious issue, even the names of proposed categories are debated. One such taxonomy follows:

1. *Dharmasastra or the Laws:* This is represented by 18 books. Each book corresponds to an age of time.
2. *Itihasa or the Histories:* This is represented by 4 books. It includes the Mahakavyas, or Epics Mahabharata and the Ramayana.
3. *Purana or the Writings:* This is represented by 18 books. They are secondary scriptures that mainly focus on Vishnu or Shiva as the preferred supreme Deity.
4. *Sutras or Proverbs:* This is represented by 6 categories of documents: the Shiksha, Vyakarana, Chandas, Nirukta, Jyotisha, & Kalpa.
5. *Agama or the Doctrines:* There are three major divisions by doctrine: the Vaisnava, Saiva, and Sakta. Another way of grouping them is by Mantra, Tantra, and Yantra.
6. *Darsana (aka Dyasana) or Philosophies:* This is represented by 6 schools of thought: Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Purva Mimamsa, & Uttara Mimamsa (aka Vedanta).

Itihaas: Itihasa is the word for *History*. The word is also used in most other Indian languages, with the same meaning. The word is often used within India to refer to Hindu

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Epics, (aka Mahakavyas) such as the Ramayana, the Mahabharata. It includes the Yogavasishtha and Harivamsa.

Itihasa can also Refer to the Puranas: Some historians may also accept this use, with a view to attribute historic veracity to such legends. This usage is eschewed by most historians because the dating of events alluded to in these legends, as also the substantiation of their historic veracity and accuracy, is generally impossible.

Chronology: The Itihasa-Purana is mentioned in the Chandogya Upanishad. There are also references to the Puranas in the Atharvaveda 11.7.24 and the Satapatha Brahmana 11.5.6.8. and 13.4.3.13. There are probably also references to the Itihasa in the Nirukta. The Itihasa-Purana was considered to be almost as sacred and ancient as the Vedas. However, the ancient Itihasa-Purana was probably different from the later Itihasa and Puranas. Scholars argue that some contents of the Puranas may date to an earlier period.

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VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY

The Vedanta philosophy is drawn from the Vedas, which are the traditional Hindu scriptures. The Vedas are a diverse collection of Sanskrit writings extending back several thousand years, concerned with the knowledge of spiritual reality. The root word, "Ved," means to know in the mystical sense: to know spiritual truth. The suffix "anta" means "end" in the sense of termination and, secondly, of purpose. The end of the Vedas is the philosophical section, the "Vedanta," the portion known as the Upanishads.

The Upanishads are part of the Vedas as the New Testament is part of the Bible. They not only occur at the end of the Vedas, but are the culmination towards which the Vedas move. The Upanishadic texts are unique in their endless emphasis on the central Vedantic discovery: The Supreme Being is the Self and *your* self is *that* Self.

Vedanta's basic principles are:

(1) Nothing exists except the Divine Being, or *Brahman*. It pervades, supports, determines, and explains everything. It is called the One. The doctrine of the Spiritual Oneness of Existence follows from this.

(2) The very nature of the Soul is Divine: the Cosmic Self becomes the individual Self.

(3) The goal of the individual, then, is to realize his/her true nature, which is Divine.

(4) The Universality of religious truth: there are many ways to realize God. (Prophets differ in their interpretation of religion as to details, but not in the essentials.)

Vedanta is a scientific approach to religion and religious truth. There is no one individual associated with the origin of Vedantic philosophy, upon which Hinduism is based. Every other creed was founded by an individual. Not Hinduism. Only principles at the beginning; Truth and Universal laws discovered and passed on by the ancient Vedic sages. The main Vedantic texts are: the Upanishads, the *Bhagavad Gita,* and the *Brahma Sutras.* The Vedanta philosophy is also readily found in the teachings of Buddha, Shankara,

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Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. It is open ended, a vast cathedral of thought encompassing both the personal and impersonal approaches to divine realization.

Each religion thinks it has the truth, and therefore is superior to others. Every religion differs from others, and wherein they differ is not Vedanta, but rather wherein they are alike. Vedanta becomes self evident when any given religion acts in a universal manner, pleasing everyone.

If each religion was deprived of those elements in its creed and practice that separate it from other religions, then what remains that is Vedanta. For example: all religions teach the perfection of self-sacrifice as the highest virtue. Vedanta takes its stand on this at the start. So all religions resemble one another in this respect. They stress the virtue of renunciation, service to others, relating to others as though to one's own self, as though we had in common the same life, the same destiny and the same self, which is a simple but adequate rendering of the prime truth of Vedanta.

Vedanta is without creed, dogma, ritual or doctrine. Vedanta is the mysticism of spirituality. It is what is left over when all the differences that separate religions have been eliminated. Therefore, it is the essence of religion, the truth embedded in the heart of every religion. Vedanta is the Godhead that makes every religion divine.

Vedanta is the chief means whereby each religion will have the incentive to practice tolerance and acceptance toward all other faiths. Every religion, every sect, thinks it has found the truth and it alone has found it. A universal disease!

Throughout history it is the same....To this day. Not only Christians, Jews, and Moslems, but Hindus, Buddhists, Sufis, etc.

How to break the hold of this compulsion?

Vedanta shows the way. It teaches that Truth is universal, that it is continually revealed, that the prophets keep coming, that the Truth may be known via many paths. if followed faithfully, and spiritually.

One more golden virtue of the Vedanta philosophy: With the help of Vedanta we can practice our personal devotions, fervent in our faith and dedication, without feeling that we alone can reach the goal, and convinced quite convinced that others, too, may succeed, though on another path.

Vedanta is not a matter of belief but realization. We are not asked to believe but to realize. If there is a God, then we should be able to experience him.

Not faith alone, but function. Not belief, but behaviour.

Vedanta gives freedom to individuals to advance along their own line of development.

Shankaracharya is the most important teacher of the Advaita school of Vedanta, and his commentaries to the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita and the Brahmasutras define the parameters of *Advaita* thought. However, it must be remembered that all Vedanta

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philosophy really goes back to the Upanishads, and *Shankaracharya* is regarded as a pre-eminent teacher who continued the Upanishadic tradition. The name *Shankaracharya* has become a title for the heads of the numerous Advaita institutions in India today, because of the great respect and fame associated with it.

The philosophy of Advaita, literally non-dualism, is the premier and oldest extant among the Vedanta schools of Indian philosophy. The Upanishadic quest is to understand Brahman, the source of everything, the *Atman*, the Self, and the relationship between Brahman and *Atman*. The Upanishads explore these issues from different angles. The Advaita school teaches a complete essential identity between Brahman and *Atman*. In other vedantic traditions, the essential relationship between *Atman* and Brahman is understood in different ways.

The Advaita Vedanta has been classified into three sections, named *History*, *Philosophers* and *Philosophy*. The "History" section deals with Shankaracharya, the issues involved in reckoning his date, the living Advaita tradition and related topics. Pre-Shankaran Vedanta, Gaudapada, Shankaracharya, his disciples, Mandana Misra and post-Shankaran advaitins are discussed in appropriate pages under the "Philosophers" section. The "Philosophy" section starts with a brief introduction to various schools of Indian philosophy and the source texts of Vedanta, the Upanishads. Philosophical issues in Advaita Vedanta are examined in detail in this section. More pages on different aspects of Advaita Vedanta and its relation to other systems are under construction.

The Supreme Swan: In the background is an artistic rendering of a swan, with the Sanskrit sentence *Brahmaiva satyam*-Brahman is the only Truth. The swan motif is seen in the seals of many Advaita organizations. The figure seen here has been adapted from the official seal of the Sringeri Matha, an ancient and one of the most important centres of Advaita Vedanta in India. The swan is a very popular motif in traditional Hindu symbolism. It can be found in oil-lamps used in temples and at shrines in people's homes.

The swan has a special association with Advaita Vedanta. The swan is called *hamsa* in the sanskrit language. The greatest masters in the Advaita tradition are called *paramahamsas*-the great swans. The word *hamsa* is a variation of *so'ham*: I am He, which constitutes the highest realization. There are other equivalences between the swan and the advaitin, that make the swan a particularly apt symbol for Advaita Vedanta. The swan stays in water, but its feathers remain dry. Similarly, the advaitin lives in the world, yet strives to remain unaffected by life's ups and downs.

In India, the swan is also mythically credited with the ability to separate milk from water. Similarly, the advaitin discriminates the eternal *Atman* from the non-eternal world. The *Atman* that is Brahman is immanent in the world, just like milk is seemingly inseparably mixed with water, but it can never be truly realized without the *nitya-anitya-vastu viveka*-right discrimination between the eternal and ephemeral-that is essential for the advaitin. The swan is thus a symbol for the *Ivanmukta*, who is liberated while still alive in this world, by virtue of having realized Brahman.

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Vedanta is a school of philosophy within Hinduism. The word *Vedanta* is a compound of *veda* "knowledge" and *anta* "end, conclusion", translating to "the culmination of the *Vedas*". Vedanta is also called *Uttara Mimamsa*, or the 'latter' or 'higher enquiry', and is often paired with Purva Mimamsa, the 'former enquiry'. Purva Mimamsa, usually simply called Mimamsa, deals with explanations of the fire-sacrifices of the Vedic mantras (in the Samhita portion of the Vedas) and Brahmanas, while Vedanta explicates the esoteric teachings of the raryakas (the "forest scriptures"), and the Upanishads, composed from the 6th century BC until modern times.

History: While the traditional Vedic 'Karma kanda', or ritualistic components of religion, continued to be practiced through the Brahmins as meditative and propitiatory rites to guide society to self-knowledge, more Jnana-or knowledge-centered understandings began to emerge. These are mystical streams of Vedic religion that focused on meditation, self-discipline and spiritual connectivity rather than on rituals.

Etymologically, *veda* means "knowledge" and *anta* means "end", so the literal meaning of the term "Vednta" is "the end of knowledge" or "the ultimate knowledge" or "matter appended to the Veda". In earlier writings, Sanskrit 'Vedanta' simply referred to the Upanishads, the most speculative and philosophical of the Vedic texts. However, in the medieval period of Hinduism, the word Vedanta came to mean the school of philosophy that interpreted the Upanishads. Traditional Vedanta considers scriptural evidence, or shabda pramana, as the most authentic means of knowledge, while perception, or pratyakssa, and logical inference, or anumana, are considered to be subordinate (but valid).

Formalization: The systematization of Vedantic ideas into one coherent treatise was undertaken by Badarayana in the Vedanta Sutra, or Brahma Sutra. The cryptic aphorisms of the Vedanta Sutras are open to a variety of interpretations, resulting in the formation of numerous Vedanta schools, each interpreting the texts in its own way and producing its own sub-commentaries claiming to be faithful to the original. Consistent throughout Vedanta, however, is the exhortation that ritual be eschewed in favour of the individual's quest for truth through meditation governed by a loving morality, secure in the knowledge that infinite bliss awaits the seeker. Near all existing sects of Hinduism are directly or indirectly influenced by the thought systems developed by Vedantic thinkers. Hinduism to a great extent owes its survival to the formation of the coherent and logically advanced systems of Vedanta.

In Modern Times: Advaita Vedanta has influenced a number of modern scientists, philosophers and authors. Nikola Tesla was influenced by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, who propounded Vedanta vigorously in the West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many other Indian teachers followed in due course, including Yogananda and others who came to North America to preach Vedanta and related philosophies. Erwin Schrödinger claimed to have been inspired by Vedanta in his discovery of quantum theory. According to his biographer Walter Moore: "The unity and continuity

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of Vedanta are reflected in the unity and continuity of wave mechanics. In 1925, the world view of physics was a model of a great machine composed of separable interacting material particles. During the next few years, Schrödinger and Werner Heisenberg and their followers created a universe based on superimposed, inseparable waves of probability amplitudes. This new view would be entirely consistent with the Vedantic concept of All in One."

Fritjof Capra's book The Tao of Physics is one among several that pursues this viewpoint as it investigates the relationship between modern, particularly quantum, physics and the core philosophies of various Eastern religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. Unfortunately, such writings by western authors often run the risk of oversimplifying and ignoring important differences between Eastern religions. For instance, pre-modern Vedantins argued for the existence of an eternal self, or *Atman*, while Buddhism denies it. However, in recent times, the availability of an increasing number of accurate translations of Vedantic works, commentaries by Western scientists like Schrodinger and Capra, and easier access to original texts have made it possible for modern students of Vedanta and physics to overcome the semantic gap arising due to cultural differences and approach their study in a more informed manner.

Among other prominent Western figures who have been influenced by and commented on Vedanta are Max Muller, Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood, Romain Rolland, Alan Watts, Eugene Wigner, Arnold Toynbee, and Will Durant.

Source Texts: All forms of Vedanta are drawn primarily from the Upanishads, a set of philosophical and instructive Vedic scriptures, which deal mainly with forms of meditation. "The Upanishads are commentaries on the Vedas, their putative end and essence, and thus known as Vedanta = 'End of the Veda'. They are considered the fundamental essence of all the Vedas and although they form the backbone of Vedanta, portions of Vedantic thought are also derived from some of the earlier Aranyakas.

The primary philosophy captured in the Upanishads, that of one absolute reality termed as Brahman is the main principle of Vedanta. The sage Badarayana was one of the major proponents of this philosophy and author of the Brahma Sutras based on the Upanishads. The concept of Brahman – the Supreme Spirit or the eternal, self existent, immanent and transcedent Supreme and Ultimate Reality which is the divine ground of all Being-is central to most schools of Vedanta. The concept of God or Ishvara is also there, and the Vedantic sub-schools differ mainly in how they identify God with Brahman.

The contents of the Upanishads are often couched in enigmatic language, which has left them open to various interpretetions. Over a period of time, several scholars have interpreted the writings in Upanishads and other scriptures like Brahma Sutras according to their own understanding and the need of their time. There are a total of six important interpretations of these source texts, out of which, three (Advaita Vedanta, Vishishtadvaita and Dvaita) are prominent, both in India and abroad. These Vedantic schools of thought

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were founded by Shri Adishankara, Shri Ramanuja and Shri Madhvacharya, respectively. It should be noted, however, that the Indian pre-Shankara Buddhist writer Bhavya in the Madhyamakahrdaya Karika describes the Vedanta philosophy as "Bhedabheda". Proponents of other Vedantic schools continue to write and develop their ideas as well, although their works are not widely known outside of smaller circles of followers in India.

Doctrines: Vedanta is from the Sanskrit meaning "end of the Vedas." This primarily refers to the Upanishads. Vedanta is the most widespread of the six philosophical systems of Hinduism and has contributed most directly to the development of later Hindu thought. There are three main schools of Vedanta. The basic doctrine of Vedanta philosophy is that the *Atman*, self or soul, is identical with Brahman, the All-Soul or Absolute Reality. Brahman is entire and indivisible so one cannot exist separately as a part or an emanation of Brahman. Nothing real exists besides Brahman.

This is the doctrine of the oldest school of Vedanta called Advaita, or non-dualism, which was expounded by the philosopher Shankara. As reality is nondual, the world of phenomena only appears to be real. It is described as maya, illusion, but it does have empirical viability sustained by avidya, ignorance, and only dispelled by Vidya, knowledge, in the form of Jnana, meditative insight. Shankara's personality is paradoxical, for though strongly teaching the Advaita doctrine, he also composed some beautiful and moving hymns. The teachings of Shankara were elaborated by a long line of scholars.

The second most important school is VisistAdvaita, qualified non-dualism, advocated by Ramanuja. This is the doctrine of one God qualified by cit, souls, and acit, matter. God is the only absolute reality and the only object worthy of love and devotion. Matter and souls are equally ultimate and real and are the visesanas, qualities, of God, and are dependent on God as they exist entirely for and within him. Ramanuja successfully joined personal theism with absolutistic philosophy. Lack of faith was more important to him than ignorance in obscuring God. Bhakti, devotion, was essential to gain liberation.

The Dvaita school was founded by Madhva. Reality consists of two principles, God as the one infinite independent principle, and matter and souls, which is finite reality and dependent on God. The material world is essentially real and the distinction between God and jivas, souls, is real and beginningless. There is a fivefold distinction: between God and jivas, between God and insentient objects, between jivas, between jivas and insentient objects, and between insentient objects. Jivas are subject to God and infinite in number with a gradation according to Karma. Moksha, liberation, is attained by the blissful experience of one's pure nature through devotion as a servant of Krishna.

Besides the three main schools, there have been a number of subschools, some of which have split into further groups. The more significant are the traditions of Nimbarka (see Nimavats), Vallabha (see separate entry), and Chaitanya (see Gaufdiya Vaishnavas). Also see entries on Shankara and Dashanamis. Vedantic doctrines have been important in modern Hindu reform movements, such as the Brahmo Samaj (see separate entry), and

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to many yoga schools. New forms of Vedanta continue to appear, with more recent examples being Radhakrishnan, Sri Aurobindo (see Aurobindo Ashram) and the Ramakrishna Mission (see separate entry).

History: Historically, there are three periods of Vedanta. First is the creative period of the Upanishads. The Upanishads were an intellectual and social rebellion against the closed mechanical priesthood supported by the Brahmanas. The oldest Upanishads date from the eighth century BC and are Vedic in being associated with the Brahmanas, texts dealing with the sacred power in the sacrificial ritual.

These early Upanishads are the Brhadaranyaka, Chandogya, Aitareya, Taittiriya, and Kansitaki Upanishads. Of later origin are the Upanishads of a third group, which has only a slight Vedic association or none at all. Many of them are sectarian. Other texts called Upanishads have been written into modern times.The second historical period is that of the systematisation and harmonisation of the Upanishads. The most important text in this is Bandarayanas's Brahma Sutra or Vedanta Sutra. This was a synthesis of Upanishadic doctrine written early in the Common Era. After the Brahma Sutra came a long period of development.

The grammarian Bhartrhari in about the fifth century conceived Brahman as essentially word symbolised by om. Gandapada commented on the *Mandukya* Upanishad and said in his doctrine of non-origination that the world is maya, only an appearance. Buddhist influence can be seen in his work.The third historical period is that of commentaries on the Brahma Sutra and commentaries on those commentaries as well as other Vedantic works. The most outstanding exponent of Vedanta was Shankara. It is believed by some scholars that Shankara was first a follower of Patanjali's yoga system. Gandapada was the main influence on Shankara, and tradition says he was the teacher of Shankara's teacher. Shankara lived in the eighth century.

Many pupils and teachers continued the work of Shankara including Mandava Misra and Padmapada. Others founded subschools such as Vachaspati, who joined the teachings of Shankara and Mandana Misra. Other writers of the school of Shankara include Vidyaramja in the fourteenth century, Prakasananda and Madhusudana in the sixteenth century, and Sadananda Vyasa in the seventeenth century. Ramanuja, the founder of VisistAdvaita Vedanta, lived from 1017 to 1137 and Madhva, the founder of Dvaita Vedanta, lived from 1238 to 1317.

The followers of Shankara opposed and persecuted Madhva, who probably as a result taught that Shankara was a reincarnation of the demon Manimat from the Mahabharata.Vedanta has had an important impact on the West, starting with the visit of Swami Vivekananda to the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893. In 1894 he established the Vedanta Society in New York and talked on Vedanta all over America before returning to India to found the Ramakrishna Mission, which is today the foremost Vedanta—inspired religious organisation.

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Symbols: Vedanta in theory does not have a wide use of symbolism, especially Advaita. But in practice there are symbols. The sacred syllable om symbolises Brahman as being essentially word or speech. There are even images of Shankara worshipped by devotees. An example is the one in a small shrine near Srisailam in Andhra Pradesh on the site where Shankara performed penance during his travels around India.

Modern Vedanta-based groups such as the Ramakrishna Mission have evolved their own symbolism (see Symbols in Ramakrishna Mission). Ramanuja's school is largely followed by the Shri Vaishnavas, in which devotion plays a large part and is involved with temples and the images of Sri and Vishnu in various forms (see Shri Vaishnavas). Madhva established his main temple himself at Udipi, which he consecrated to Krishna. In this temple he installed an image of Bala Krishna obtained from Dwarka, and the temple still flourishes. The Madhva school also venerates the other avataras, incarnations, of Vishnu, as well as and the five orthodox gods.

Adherents: Nearly all educated Hindus in modern India are adherents of the Vedanta. About three-quarters follow Shankara's Advaita school, and the remainder are divided among the other schools. Shankara set up the monastic orders of the Dashanamis, with a network all over India (see Dashanamis). Shri Vaishnavas in South India follow Ramanuja's school (see Shri Vaishnavas), and the Madhvas are also mainly in South India.There have been and still are many followers of Vedanta in the West. Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood, and others were attracted to the Vedanta Society, established in New York in 1894.

Many schools of yoga have Vedanta as a philosophical base and these are widespread in the West. In India new forms of Vedanta continue to appear and attract adherents. Reform groups such as the Brahmo Samaj are Vedanta inspired. The eclectic thought of Radhakrishnan is based on the Vedanta, but though influential no actual school was founded by him. Sri Aurobindo established a large ashram at Pondicherry. The Ramakrishna Math and Mission is the major Vedantic organisation with centres all over India and the world (see Ramakrishna Mission). The Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre in England produces a magazine Vedanta (formerly called Vedanta for East and West).

The basic problem of Shankara's philosophy is how such pure consciousness appears, in ordinary experience, to be individualized ("my consciousness") and to be of an object ("consciousness of blue"). As he stated it, subject and object are as opposed to each other as light and darkness, yet the properties of one are superimposed on the other. If something is a fact of experience and yet ought not to be so—*i.e.*, is rationally unintelligible—then this must be false.

According to Shankara's theory of error, the false appearance is a positive, presented entity that is characterized neither as existent (because it is sublated when the illusion is corrected) nor as non-existent (because it is presented, given as much as the real is). The false, therefore, is indescribable either as being or as non-being, it is not a fiction,

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such as a round square. Shankara thus introduced a new category of the "false" apart from the usual categories of the existent and the nonexistent. The world and finite individuals are false in this sense: they are rationally unintelligible, their reality is not logically deducible from Brahman, and their experience is cancelled with the knowledge of Brahman.

The world and finite selves are not creations of Brahman; they are not real emanations or transformations of it. Brahman is not capable of such transformation or emanation. They are appearances that are superimposed on Brahman because of man's ignorance. This superimposition was sometimes called adhyasa by Shankara and was often identified with avidya. Later writers referred to avidya as the cause of the error. Thus, ignorance came to be regarded as a beginningless, positive something that conceals the nature of reality and projects the false appearances on it. Shankara, however, did distinguish between three senses of being: the merely illusory (pratibhasika), the empirical (Vyavaharika; which has unperceived existence and pragmatic efficacy), and transcendental being of one, indeterminate Brahman.

In his epistemology, Shankara's followers in general accepted the point of view of the Mimamsa of Kumarila's school. Like Kumarila, they accepted six ways of knowing: perception, inference, verbal testimony, comparison, nonperception, and postulation. In general, cognitions are regarded as modifications of the inner sense in which the pure spirit is reflected or as the pure spirit limited by respective mental modifications. The truth of cognitions is regarded as intrinsic to them, and a knowable fact is accepted as true so long as it is not rejected as false.

In perception a sort of identity is achieved between the form of the object and the form of the inner sense; in fact, the inner sense is said to assume the form of the object. In their theory of inference, the Nyaya five-membered syllogism is rejected in favour of a three-membered one. Furthermore, the sort of inference admitted by the Nyaya, in which the major term is universally present, is rejected, because nothing save Brahman has this property according to the system.

Shankara regarded moral life as a necessary preliminary to metaphysical knowledge and thus laid down strict ethical conditions to be fulfilled by one who wants to study Vedanta. For him, however, the highest goal of life is to know the essential identity of his own self with Brahman, and though moral life may indirectly help in purifying the mind and intellect, over an extended period of time knowledge comes from following the long and arduous process whose three major stages are study of the scriptures under appropriate conditions, reflection aimed at removing all possible intellectual doubts about the non-dualistic thesis, and meditation on the identity of *Atman* and Brahman.

Moksha is not, according to Shankara, a perfection to be achieved; it is rather the essential reality of one's own self to be realized through destruction of the ignorance that conceals it. God is how Brahman appears to an ignorant mind that regards the world as

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real and looks for its creator and ruler. Religious life is sustained by dualistic concepts: the dualism between man and God, between virtue and vice, and between this life and the next. In the state of Moksha, these dualisms are transcended. An important part of Shankara's faith was that Moksha was possible in bodily existence. Because what brings this supreme state is the destruction of ignorance, nothing need happen to the body; it is merely seen for what it really is—an illusory limitation on the spirit.

Shankara's chief direct pupils were Sureshvara, the author of Varttika ("Gloss") on his bhasya and of Naiskarmya-siddhi ("Establishment of the State of Non-Action"), and Padmapada, author of Panchapadika, a commentary on the first five padas, or sections, of the bhasya. These early pupils raised and settled issues that were not systematically discussed by Shankara himself—issues that later divided his followers into two large groups: those who followed the Vivarana (a work written on Padmapada's Panchapadika by one Prakashatman in the 12th century) and those who followed Vachaspati's commentary (known as Bhamati) on Shankara's bhasya.

Among the chief issues that divided Shankara's followers was the question about the locus and object of ignorance. The Bhamati school regarded the individual self as the locus of ignorance and sought to avoid the consequent circularity (arising from the fact that the individual self is itself a product of ignorance) by postulating a beginningless series of such selves and their ignorances. The Vivarana school regarded both the locus and the object of ignorance to be Brahman and sought to avoid the contradiction (arising from the fact that Brahman is said to be of the nature of knowledge) by distinguishing between pure consciousness and valid knowledge (pramajnana).

The latter, a mental modification, destroys ignorance, and the former, far from being opposed to ignorance, manifests ignorance itself, as evidenced by the judgment "I am ignorant." The two schools also differed in their explanations of the finite individual. The Bhamati school regarded the individual as a limitation of Brahman just as the space within the four walls of a room is a limitation of the big space. The Vivarana school preferred to regard the finite individual as a reflection of Brahman in the inner sense. As the moon is one, but its reflections are many, so also Brahman is one, but its reflections are many.

Later followers of Shankara, such as Shriharsa in his *Khandanakhandakhadya* and his commentator Chitsukha, used a destructive, negative dialectic in the manner of Nagarjuna to criticize man's basic concepts about the world.

Vedanta—Concepts of Bhedabheda

The philosophies of transcendence and immanence (bhedabheda) assert both identity and difference between the world and finite individuals, on the one hand, and Brahman, on the other. The world and finite individuals are real and yet both different and not different from the Brahman.

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Among pre-Shankara commentators on the Vedanta-sutras, Bhartrprapancha defended the thesis of bhedabheda, and Bhaskara (c. 9th century) closely followed him. Bhartrprapancha's commentary is not extant; the only known source of knowledge is Shankara's reference to him in his commentary on the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, in which *Bhartrprapantilde*; ca is said to have held that though Brahman as cause is different from Brahman as effect, the two are identical inasmuch as the effect dissolves into the cause, as the waves return into the sea. Bhaskara viewed Brahman as both the material and the efficient cause of the world.

The doctrine of maya was totally rejected. Brahman undergoes the modifications by his own power. As waves are both different from and identical with the sea, so are the world and the finite individuals in relation to Brahman. The finite selves are parts of Brahman, as sparks of fire are parts of fire. But the finite soul exists, since beginningless time, under the influence of ignorance. It is atomic in extension and yet animates the whole body. Corresponding to the material world and the finite selves, Bhaskara ascribed to God two powers of self-modification. Bhaskara, in his theory of knowledge, distinguished between self-consciousness that is ever-present and objective knowledge that passively arises out of appropriate causal conditions but is not an activity.

Mind, thus, is a sense organ. Bhaskara subscribed to the general Vedanta thesis that knowledge is intrinsically true, though falsity is extrinsic to it. In his ethical views, Bhaskara regarded religious duties as binding at all stages of life. He upheld a theory known as Jnana-karmasamuchaya-vada: performance of duties together with knowledge of Brahman leads to liberation. In religious life, Bhaskara was an advocate of bhakti, but bhakti is not a mere feeling of love or affection for God, but rather is dhyana, or meditation, directed toward the transcendent Brahman who is not exhausted in his manifestations. Bhaskara denied the possibility of liberation in bodily existence.

The bhedabheda point of view had various other adherents: Vijnanabhiksu, Nimbarka, Vallabha, and Chaitanya.

Ramanuja (11th century) sought to synthesize a long tradition of theistic religion with the absolutistic monism of the Upanishads, a task in which he had been preceded by no less an authority than the Bhagavadgita. In his general philosophical position, he followed the vrttikara Bodhayana, the Vakyakara (to whom he referred but whose identity is not established except that he advocated a theory of real modification of Brahman), Nathamuni (c. 1000), and his own teachers' teacher Yamunacharya (c. 1050).

Vedanta—Ramanuja

The main religious inspirations are from the theistic tradition of the Alvar poet-saints and their commentators known as the Acharyas, who sought to combine knowledge with action (Karma) as the right means to liberation. There is also, besides the Vedic tradition, the religious tradition of Agamas, particularly of the Pancharatra literature. It is within

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this old tradition that Ramanuja's philosophical and religious thought developed. Ramanuja rejected Shankara's conception of Brahman as an indeterminate, qualityless, and differenceless reality on the ground that such a reality cannot be perceived, known, thought of, or even spoken about, in which case it is nothing short of a fiction. In substantiating this contention, Ramanuja undertook, in his Shri-bhasya on the Vedanta-sutras, a detailed examination of the different ways of knowing.

Perception, either non-conceptualized or conceptualized, always apprehends its object as being something, the only difference between the two modes of perception being that the former takes place when one perceives an individual of a certain class for the first time and thus does not subsume it under the same class as some other individuals. Nor can inference provide one with knowledge of an indeterminate reality, because in inference one always knows something as coming under a general rule. The same holds true of verbal testimony.

This kind of knowledge arises from understanding sentences. For Ramanuja there is nothing like a pure consciousness without subject and without object. All consciousness is of something and belongs to someone. He also held that it is not true that consciousness cannot be the object of another consciousness. In fact, one's own past consciousness becomes the object of present consciousness. Consciousness is self-shining only when it reveals an object to its own owner—*i.e.*, the self.

Rejecting Shankara's conception of reality, Ramanuja defended the thesis that Brahman is a being with infinitely perfect excellent virtues, a being whose perfection cannot be exceeded. The world and finite individuals are real, and together they constitute the body of Brahman. The category of body and soul is central to his way of thinking. Body is that which can be controlled and moved for the purpose of the spirit. The material world and the conscious spirits, though substantive realities, are yet inseparable from Brahman and thus qualify him in the same sense in which body qualifies the soul. Brahman is spiritual-material-qualified.

Ramanuja and his followers undertook criticisms of Shankara's illusionism, particularly of his doctrine of avidya (ignorance) and the falsity of the world. For Ramanuja, such a beginningless, positive avidya could not have any locus or any object, and if it does conceal the self-shining Brahman, then there would be no way of escaping from its clutches.

A most striking feature of Ramanuja's epistemology is his uncompromising realism. Whatever is known is real, and only the real can be known. This led him to advocate the thesis that even the object of error is real—error is really incomplete knowledge—and correction of error is really completion of incomplete knowledge.

The state of Moksha is not a state in which the individuality is negated. In fact, the sense of "I" persists even after liberation, for the self is truly the object of the notion of "I." What is destroyed is egoism, the false sense of independence. The means thereto is bhakti, leading to God's grace. But by bhakti Ramanuja means dhyana, or intense meditation

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with love. Obligation to perform one's scriptural duties is never transcended. Liberation is a state of blessedness in the company of God. A path emphasized by Ramanuja for all persons is complete self-surrender (prapatti) to God's will and making oneself worthy of his grace. In his social outlook, Ramanuja believed that bhakti does not recognize barriers of caste and classes.

The doctrinal differences among the followers of Ramanuja is not so great as among Shankara's. Writers such as Sudarshana Suri and Venkatanatha continued to elaborate and defend the theses of the master, and much of their writing is polemical. Some differences are to be found regarding the nature of emancipation, the nature of devotion, and other ritual matters. The followers are divided into two schools: the Uttara-kalarya, led by Venkatanatha, and the Daksina-kalarya, led by Lokacharya. One of the points at issue is whether or not emancipation is destructible; another, whether there is a difference between liberation attained by mere self-knowledge and that attained by knowledge of God. There also were differences in interpreting the exact nature of self-surrender to God and the degree of passivity or activity required of the worshipper.

Vedanta-Madhva

Madhva (born 1199?) belonged to the tradition of Vaisnava religious faith and showed a great polemical spirit in refuting Shankara's philosophy and in converting people to his own fold. An uncompromising dualist, he traced back dualistic thought even to some of the Upanishads. His main works are his commentaries on the Upanishads, the Gita, and the Vedanta-sutras. He also wrote a commentary on the Mahabharata and several logical and polemical treatises.

He glorified difference. Five types of differences are central to Madhva's system: difference between soul and God, between soul and soul, between soul and matter, between God and matter, and that between matter and matter. Brahman is the fullness of qualities, and by his own intrinsic nature, Brahman produces the world. The individual, otherwise free, is dependent only upon God. The Advaita concepts of falsity and indescribability of the world were severely criticized and rejected. In his epistemology, Madhva admitted three ways of knowing: perception, inference, and verbal testimony. In Madhva's system the existence of God cannot be proved; it can be learned only from the scriptures.

Bondage and release both are real and devotion is the only way to release, but ultimately it is God's grace that saves. Scriptural duties, when performed without any ulterior motive, purify the mind and help one to receive God's grace. Among the other theistic schools of Vedanta, brief mention may be made of the schools of Nimbarka (c. 12th century), Vallabha (15th century), and Chaitanya (16th century).

Vedanta—Nimbarka

Nimbarka's philosophy is known as Bhedabheda because he emphasized both identity and difference of the world and finite souls with Brahman. His religious sect is known

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as the *Sanaka-Sampradaya* of Vaisnavism. Nimbarka's commentary of the Vedanta-sutras is known as *Vedanta-parijata-saurabha* and is commented on by Shrinivasa in his *Vedanta-kaustubha*. Of the three realities admitted—God, souls, and matter—God is the independent reality, self-conscious, controller of the other two, free from all defects, abode of all good qualities, and both the material and efficient cause of the world.

The souls are dependent, self-conscious, capable of enjoyment, controlled, atomic in size, many in number, and eternal but seemingly subject to birth and death because of ignorance and Karma. Matter is of three kinds: nonnatural matter, which constitutes divine body; natural matter constituted by the three gunas; and time. Both souls and matter are pervaded by God. Their relation is one of difference-with-nodifference.

Liberation is because of a knowledge that makes God's grace possible. There is no need for Vedic duties after knowledge is attained, nor is performance of such duties necessary for acquiring knowledge.

Vedanta—Vallabha

Vallabha's commentary on the Vedanta-sutras is known as Anubhasya ("The Brief Commentary"), which is commented upon by Purusottama in his Bhasya-prakasha ("Lights on the Commentary"). His philosophy is called pure non-dualism—"pure" meaning "undefiled by maya." His religious sect is known as the Rudra-Sampradaya of Vaisnavism and also Pustimarga, or the path of grace. Brahman, or Shri Krishna, is viewed as the only independent reality; in his essence he is existence, consciousness, and bliss, and souls and matter are his real manifestations.

Maya is but his power of self-manifestation. Vallabha admitted neither parinama (of Samkhya) nor Vivarta (of Shankara). According to him, the modifications are such that they leave Brahman unaffected. From his aspect of "existence" spring life, senses, and body. From "consciousness" spring the finite, atomic souls. From "bliss" spring the presiding deities, or antaryamins, for whom Vallabha finds place on his ontology. This threefold nature of God pervades all beings.

World is real; but samsara, the cycle of birth and death, is unreal, and time is regarded as God's power of action. Like all other Vedantins, Vallabha rejected the Vaishesika relation of samavaya and replaced it by tadatmya, or identity. The means to liberation is bhakti, which is defined as firm affection for God and also loving service (seva). Bhakti does not lead to knowledge, but knowledge is regarded as a part of bhakti. The notion of "grace" plays an important role in Vallabha's religious thought. He is also opposed to renunciation.

Vedanta—Chaitanya

Chaitanya (1485-1533) was one of the most influential and remarkable of the medieval saints of India. His life is characterized by almost unique emotional fervour, hovering on

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the pathological, which was directed toward Shri Krishna (the incarnation of Vishnu). He has not written anything, but the discourses recorded by contemporaries give an idea of his philosophical thought that was later developed by his followers, particularly by Rupa Gosvamin and Jiva Gosvamin. Rupa is the author of two great works: *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* ("The Ocean of the Nectar of the Essence of Bhakti") and *Ujjvalanilamani* ("The Shining Blue Jewel"). Jiva's main work is the great and voluminous Satsamdarbha.

These are the main sources of the philosophy of Bengal Vaisnavism. Chaitanya rejected the conception of an intermediate Brahman. Brahman, according to him, has three powers: the transcendent power that is threefold (the power of bliss, the power of being, and the power of consciousness) and the two immanent powers, namely, the powers of creating souls and the material world. Jiva Gosvamin regarded bliss to be the very substance of Brahman who, with the totality of all his powers, is called God. Jiva distinguished between God's essential power, his peripheral power that creates the souls, and the external power (called maya) that creates cosmic forms. The relation between God and his powers is neither identity nor difference, nor identity-with-difference.

This relation, unthinkable and suprarational, is central to Chaitanya's philosophy. For Jiva, the relation between any whole and its parts is unthinkable. Bhakti is the means to emancipation. Bhakti is conceived as a reciprocal relation between man and God, a manifestation of God's power in man. The works of Jiva and Rupa delineated a detailed and fairly exhaustive classification of the types and gradations of bhakti.

Vedanta in Daily Life

The Upanishads form the basis of Vedanta. Vedanta is the basic culture of India. It is the national philosophy of India. It is the Moksha Sastra or the Science of Emancipation. Absolutism is the pivot of Vedanta philosophy.

Vedanta upholds the reality of the indivisible, immanent and transcendent Spirit. It does not exclude matter. It does not exclude anything. The oneness of all existence is the message which Vedanta teaches. It has kept Hindu society alive for the past several thousand years.

Vedanta is the only bold philosophy which dares call man God, not merely the son of God, or His servant. It proclaims with emphasis that you are the immortal, all-pervading *Atman*, the Universal Soul or Supreme Brahman in essence, in reality. Boldness is the key-note of Vedanta. The message of Vedanta is fearlessness, soul-force and unity of consciousness.

Vedanta does not ask for converts or proselytes, but a deeper reassessment of the divine-human equation, a return to the fundamental question of every being: "What am I really ? What is my real Self ?" Vedanta proclaims: "Man, in essence, is identical with the Supreme Being."

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Vedanta denotes one's identity with the rest of humanity. According to Vedanta, there is no stranger in this world. Everyone is related to one another in the kinship of the Spirit. In Vedanta, there is no 'mine' and 'for me'; but 'ours' and 'for us'; and ultimately, 'His' and 'for Him'. If the Vedanta philosophy is rightly understood and acted up to, then it will obliterate all evils that emanate from factional and racial prejudices. Vedanta is no creed, no ceremony or form of worship. It is the science of right living. It is not the sole monopoly of the Hindus or the recluses. It is for all.

Vedanta has no quarrel with any religion whatsoever. It preaches universal principles. Vedanta is the only universal, eternal religion. It is a great leveler. It unites all. It gives room to all.

Vedanta encloses within its sphere all the religions of the world and is strong enough to make them all useful and enduring. Vedanta never interferes with forms. It concerns itself solely with the life of religions. The Christian need not renounce his Christianity, the Buddhist may stick to his Noble Eightfold path, the Muslim may stick to his Quran, and yet all these may follow the Vedanta and realize in practice all its high ideals and truths. Their love to their respective prophets and Bibles will become more sober, more enlightened, and more enduring. Religious animosity will vanish and the world will move on to its great end without any friction, with greater dignity and more goodwill among its denizens.

Vedanta means no slavery. It gives freedom to all. It never condemns any man as beyond hope, never looks upon anyone as accused, but takes all mankind within its fold. Vedanta is extremely catholic and liberal in its outlook. Vedanta can offer to the modern society a common faith, a common body of principles, and a common moral discipline. It is highly scientific in outlook and has a real appeal to men and women of today.

There is no philosophy so bold and sublime as the philosophy of the Vedanta. It is Vedanta alone that can eradicate totally human sufferings and can bring everlasting peace and happiness. Even a little understanding and a little practice of Vedanta can raise a man to magnanimous heights of Brahmanhood or God-consciousness and remove all sorts of fears, worries and anxieties of this mundane life.

Some ignorant people only say that Vedanta preaches immorality, hatred and pessimism. This is a very sad mistake. Vedanta does not preach either immorality or even indifference to morality. Vedanta wants you to destroy Moha or selfish love and passion for the body, and develop pure, disinterested cosmic love or the magnanimous divine Love. Vedanta never preaches pessimism, but it preaches the pinnacle of optimism. Licentiousness is mistaken for a life of expansion. If a man can eat anything in any hotel in any part of the world, if he can move socially with any man or woman, that does not mean he is a Vedantin. There is much tall talk of Vedanta nowadays. People talk of unity, oneness and equality, but fight out for little, useless things. They are full of jealousy and hatred. I cannot imagine this. I am simply stunned.

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I believe in practical Vedanta. I believe in solid spiritual practices. I believe in thorough overhauling of worldly nature, worldliness of various sorts.

You must be a practical Vedantin. You should live in the spirit of Vedanta. Mere theorizing and lecturing is only intellectual gymnastics and lingual warfare. This will not suffice. What is the use of reading too many books on Vedanta like Chit-Sukhi, Khandana Khanda Khadyam, etc. ? You must radiate love to one and all. The spirit of Vedanta must be ingrained in your cells, tissues, veins, nerves and bones. It must become part and parcel of your nature. You must think of unity, speak of unity and act in unity.

The sun, the Ganga, the flowers, the sandal trees, the fruit-bearing trees, the cows- all teach practical Vedanta to the world. They live for serving the humanity in a disinterested spirit. The sun radiates its light alike over a cottage of a peasant and a palace of a king. The cool refreshing waters of the Ganga are drunk by all. The flowers waft their fragrance to all without expecting anything. The sandal tree wafts its aroma even to the man who cuts it with an axe. All fruit-bearing trees behave in the same manner. O selfish, ignorant man ! Learn lessons from these practical Vedantins and become wise.

Vedanta does not preach a doctrine of negation of human effort. It wants you to have a changed mental attitude. It demands a changed angle of vision. Till now, the world was everything. Hereafter, the Reality alone is everything.

Once there lived two friends, Ram and Gopal. They were both philosophers. By analysis and self-enquiry, Ram learned to see the Glory of the Supreme Self reflected in and through all the universe. But Gopal continued to remain a theoretical philosopher, condemning the universe as an illusion and dream containing nothing but evil and vice.

One day, after a long time, Ram called on his friend. Gopal discussed, for a long time, as usual, the evil in this universe, and in the end asked Ram what present he had brought for his friend. Ram, after thinking a while, produced a broken piece of mirror from his pocket and handing it over to Gopal, said, "This is my little and humble present. It will help you to understand your own beauty and charm, which you cannot otherwise see."

Gopal learnt a lesson, and from that moment began to visualize and understand the Glory of the Supreme Self reflected in all the universe. Nothing is useless in this world. The non-self exists to reflect and glorify the Self. Otherwise how can you know the existence of the Self ? Verily, the non-self is the mirror that truly reflects the Self for us to cognize.

So, too, evil is the mirror for good. The presence of sages and saints is easily cognized amidst an assembly of ignorant men. Learn to see the good reflected by the evil, and say, "Evil exists to remind me of good, the perishable exists to remind me of the Imperishable," and so on.

Truly, this universe is a mirror that reminds us of God. Learn not to condemn it as an illusion and dream, but to utilize it to feel the presence of God.

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Learn to discriminate between the permanent and the impermanent. Behold the Self in all beings, in all objects. Share what you have, physical, mental, moral or spiritual, with all. Serve the Self in all. Feel when you serve others, that you are serving your own Self. Love thy neighbour as thyself. Melt all illusory differences. Remove all barriers that separate man from man. Mix with all. Embrace all. Destroy the sex-idea and body-idea by constantly thinking on the Self or the sexless, bodiless *Atman*. Fix the mind on the Self when you work. This is practical Vedanta. This is the essence of the teachings of the Upanishads and sages of yore. This is real, eternal life in *Atman*. Put these things in practice in the daily battle of life. You will shine as dynamic Yogin or Jivanmukta. There is no doubt of this.

The Absolute Reality which is the fundamental cause of the universe and all beings is full (beyond all limitations which can be caused by time, space, and material). It is pure, free indivisible and homogeneous Consciousness. The individual self *Jiva*) which appears limited by time, space, and material, or name and form, is also full, pure, free, indivisible and homogeneous Consciousness. The individual Consciousness (self) which is full has come from that Absolute Consciousness which is also full. Here comes a discrepancy. How can something full come from something that is also full and still both remain full? This disparity is solved by the illustration of space. Space is recognized as full, free, pure, boundless, unattached, all-pervading, indivisible and homogeneous. When a barrier is erected in space, we say the space is divided and call it "room space, limited space,", etc. If there is dust or contamination in the room, we say the space in the room is dusty or impure. We all know that space cannot be divided or become impure.

It is always full, free, pure and indivisible. The divisions are assumed due to the barriers we construct in space. Similar is the nature of the Absolute Consciousness which is the Supreme Reality. Nothing can ever come from it. It alone exists. The separate individuality which one feels is due to the limiting adjuncts of body-mind complex which are, in reality, illusory appearances like dream objects or mirage seen in a desert or a rope mistakenly seen as a snake in dim light. When viewed in its real nature as Pure Consciousness alone, divested of its limitations, the individual Self is known to be one and the same Absolute Consciousness.

Vedanta is the teachings of the Upanishads (the concluding chapters of the four Vedas), the Brahma Sutras, the Bhagavad Gita, and their commentaries by Shri Shankaracharya, the 8th century philosopher saint. *Veda* means "knowledge" and *anta* means "end". Thus Vedanta means "the end of knowledge".

Sub-schools of Vedanta

Advaita Vedanta: Advaita Vedanta is the most influential school of all, and many philosopers, both Indian and Western, have been influenced by it. It was propounded by Adi Shankara, a great Hindu philosopher, and his Paramaguru Gaudapada, who described Ajativada. According to this school of Vedanta, Brahman is the only reality, and the world,

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as it appears, is illusory. As Brahman is the sole reality, it cannot be said to possess any attributes whatsoever. An illusionary power of Brahman called My causes the world to arise. Ignorance of this reality is the cause of all suffering in the world and only upon true knowledge of Brahman can liberation be attained. When a person tries to know Brahman through his mind, due to the influence of My, Brahman appears as God (Ishvara), separate from the world and from the individual. In reality, there is no difference between the individual soul *j+vtman* (see *Atman*) and Brahman. Liberation lies in knowing the reality of this non-difference (*i.e.* a-dvaita, "not-two" ness). Thus, the path to liberation is finally only through knowledge (*jnna*).

Vishishtadvaita: Vishishtadvaita was propounded by Ramanuja and says that the *j+vtman* is a part of Brahman, and hence is similar, but not identical. The main difference from Advaita is that in Visishtadvaita, the Brahman is asserted to have attributes, including the individual conscious souls and matter. Brahman, matter and the individual souls are distinct but mutually inseparable entities. This school propounds Bhakti or devotion to God visualized as Vishnu to be the path to liberation. My is seen as the creative power of God.

Dvaita: Dvaita was propounded by Madhva. It identifies God with Brahman completely, and in turn with Vishnu or his incarnation Krishna. It regards Brahman, all individual souls (*j+vtmans*) and matter as eternal and mutually separate entities. This school also advocated Bhakti as the route to liberation. There is no concept of My as an illusionary power behind the world.

Dvaitdvaita: Dvaitdvaita was propounded by Nimbrka, based upon an earlier school called Bhedbheda, which was taught by Bhaskara. According to this school, the *jivtman* is at once the same as yet different from Brahman.Jiva relation may be regarded as dvaita from one point of view and Advaita from another.

ShuddhAdvaita: ShuddhAdvaita propounded by Vallabha. This system also encouraged Bhakti as the only means of liberation to go to Goloka (lit., the world of cows). The world is said to be the sport (Leela) of Krishna, who is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*.

Achintya Bhedbheda: Achintya Bhedbheda propounded by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. This doctrine is followed by the world famous ISKCON movement.

While Adi Shankara propounded the Smrta denomination, all the other above-mentioned acharyas were strongly Vaishnavite in orientation. The epistemology of Advaita, Vishishtadvaita and Mimamsa (*i.e.*, Purva) is common.

Purnadvaita or Integral Advaita: Sri Aurobindo, in his The Life Divine, has synthesized all the exant schools of Vedanta and given the most comprehensive resolution integrating cues from the Western metaphysics and modern science. He has also restored the umbilical cord of the Vedantic exegesis with the Vedas. For instance, his strong difference with Adi Shankara over the interpretation of *Ishavasyam* is interesting.

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The Advaita Parampara

Narayanam padmabhuvam vasishtham. Shaktim. ca tatputra parasaram. ca
vyasam. Sukam. Gaudapadam. mahantam. govindayogindram athasya Sishyam.
Sri Shankaracharyan athasya Padmapadam. ca Hastamalakam. ca Sishyam.
tam. totakam. varttikakaramanyan asmad gurun santatamanatosmi
Sadasiva samarambham. Shankaracharya madhyamam.
asmadacharya paryantam. vande guru paramparam.

These are the Advaita *guru parampara* verses, which salute the prominent gurus of Advaita, starting from narayana through Shankara and his disciples, upto the Acharyas of today. It is typical of Advaita that the first guru is called *narayana* (Vishnu) in the first verse and Sadasiva (Shiva) in the second. The parampara thus lists:

Narayana
Padmabhuva (brahma)
Vasishtha
Shakti
Parasara
Vyasa
Suka
Gaudapada
Govinda Bhagavatpada
Shankaracharya
Padmapada, Hastamalaka, Totaka, Suresvara (Varttikakara),
and others (anya:).

In the Indian religious and philosophical traditions, all knowledge is traced back to the Gods and to the Rishis who saw the vedas. Thus, the Advaita *Guru-parampara* begins with the *Daiva-parampara,* followed by the *Rishi-parampara*, which includes the vedic seers vasishtha, Shakti, parasara, his son Vyasa, (the famous redactor of the vedas, he is also traditionally identified with Badarayana, the composer of the Brahmasutras), and vyasa's son Suka. After Suka, we turn to the *Manava-parampara*, which brings us to historical times and personalities.

The traditions regarding these human gurus are recorded in the *Shankaravijaya* literature, and typically, they are regarded as incarnations of various deities Gaudapada is the famous author of the *Mandukya Karikas* that are attached to the *Mandukya*

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Upanishad. His disciple, Govinda, is regarded as an incarnation of Adisesha, the cosmic serpent. He was the preceptor of Shankara, who is regarded as an incarnation of Shiva. Shankara's four well-known disciples were named *Padmapada, Hastamalaka*, totaka and Suresvara (Varttikakara). Tradition has it that Shankara appointed these four disciples as heads of the four Mathas that he founded. The others are the gurus who come later in the tradition.

The doctrine of Advaita Vedanta as expounded by Shankara can be summed up in half a verse: *"Brahma Satyam Jagan Mithya Jivo Brahmaiva Na Aparah"*—Brahman (the Absolute) is alone real; this world is unreal; and the Jiva or the individual soul is non-different from Brahman. This is the quintessence of his philosophy.

According to Sri Shankara, whatever is, is Brahman. Brahman Itself is absolutely homogeneous. All difference and plurality are illusory.

Tenets of Advaita Vedanta

- Brahman (the Absolute) is alone real; this world is unreal; and the Jiva or the individual soul is non-different from Brahman.
- The *Atman* is self-evident (Svatah-siddha). It is not established by extraneous proofs. It is not possible to deny the *Atman*, because it is the very essence of the one who denies It.
- Brahman is not an object, as it is Adrisya, beyond the reach of senses, mind or intellect. It is not another. It is all-full, infinite, changeless, self-existent, self-delight, self-knowledge and self-bliss. It is Svarupa, essence. It is the essence of the knower. It is the Seer (Drashta), Transcendent (Turiya) and Silent Witness (Sakshi). It is always the Witnessing Subject. It can never become an object as it is beyond the reach of the senses. Brahman is non-dual, one without a second. It has no other beside it.
- Sat-Chit-Ananda constitute the very essence or Svarupa of Brahman, and not just its attributes.
- The world is not an illusion according to Shankara. The world is relatively real (Vyavaharika Satta), while Brahman is absolutely real (Paramarthika Satta). The unchanging Brahman appears as the changing world because of a superimposition of non-Self (objects) or Self (subject-Brahman). This is called Avidya.
- The Jiva or the individual soul is only relatively real. Its individuality lasts only so long as it is subject to unreal Upadhis or limiting conditions due to Avidya. The Jiva identifies itself with the body, mind and the senses, when it is deluded by Avidya or ignorance. Just as the bubble becomes one with the ocean when it bursts, so also the Jiva or the empirical self becomes one with Brahman when it gets knowledge of Brahman. When knowledge dawns in it through annihilation of Avidya, it is freed from its individuality and finitude and realizes its essential

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Sacchidananda nature. It merges itself in the ocean of bliss. The river of life joins the ocean of existence. This is the Truth.

- Because Samsara (or duality) exists due to ignorance or Avidya, Knowledge (Jnana) alone can make an individual realize his true nature. Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga, etc., are necessary only to purify the individual and to help remove this Avidya. All other paths culminate in Jnana.
- Brahma Jnana is not about acquiring any external knowledge (as Brahman can't be an object of knowledge), it just about removing the Avidya or Maya.

Brahma Sutras (Vedanta Sutras)

ADHYAYA 1

Adhikarana/ Sutra

PADA 1

1. Then, therefore, enquiry into Brahman.
2. From which springs the origination.
3. Scripture alone is the means.
4. All the scriptures' ultimate goal is Brahman.

5-11. Non intelligent pradhana (of Sankhya) cannot be the (seeing and willing) cause of the world.

6-12. 'Anandamaya' mentioned in the (Taittiriya) Upanisad is the Supreme Lord, not Jiva.

20-21. The golden person seen within the sun and within the eye, mentioned in the Chandogya Upanisad (1.6) is not a Jiva of high eminence, but the Supreme Lord.

22. The ether mentioned in Ch. 1.6 is not the elemental ether but the Supreme Lord.

23. The prana mentioned in Ch. 1.11.5 denotes the Supreme Lord.

24-27. The light spoken of in Ch. 3.13.7 is not physical light, but the Supreme Lord.

28-31. The prana mentioned in *Kausitaki* 3.2. is the Supreme Lord.

PADA 2

1-8. 'Manomaya' and *'prana sarira'* mentioned in Ch 3.14.1,2 is not Jiva, but the Supreme Lord.

9-10. The Being to whom Brahmanas and Kshatriyas are food, referred to in Katha 1.2.24 is the Supreme Lord.

11-12. The two entered into the cave-Katha 1.3.1-are the Supreme Lord and Jiva.

13-17. The person within the eye-Ch. 4.15.1 is the Supreme Lord.

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18-20. '*Antaryamin*' mentioned in Br. 3.7.3 is the Supreme Lord (not *pradhana* nor *Jiva*).

21-23. Being described as possessed of invisibility in Mund. 1.1.56 is the Supreme Lord (not pradhana or Jiva).

24-32. '*Atma vaisvanarah*' in Ch. 5.11.6 is the Supreme Lord.

PADA 3

1-7. Being within whom heaven and earth are woven, as in Mund. 2.2.5 is the Supreme Lord, because of the term 'atman' (not *pradhana* or *Jiva*).

8-9. 'Bhuman' (the great) in Ch. 7.23.24 is the Supreme Lord (not prana).

10-12. 'Aksara' (imperishable) in Br. 3.88 is the Supreme Lord.

13. '*Para purusa*' to be meditated upon by 'om' in Prasna. 5.5 is the Supreme Lord (because it is described as object of realization).

14-23. 'Dahara akasah' within the lotus of the heart in Ch. 8.1.1. is not elemental ether or Jiva but the Supreme Lord (-grammatical arguments!-).(22 & 23 as 6) by Shankara.

24-25. The thumb size Being in Katha 2.4.13 is not Jiva, but the Supreme Lord.

26-33. Gods qualified for Brahmavidya? (animals already denied in 7)

34-38. Sudras denied qualification.

39. The prana before whom everything trembles as in Katha 2.6.2 is the Supreme Lord.

40. Jyoti mentioned in Ch. 8.12.3 is the Supreme Lord.

41. The ether that reveals names and forms as in Ch. 8.14.1 is neither the elemental ether, nor the Jiva, but the Supreme Lord.

42-43. *Vijnana maya* in Br. 4.3-7 is not Jiva but the Supreme Lord.

PADA 4

1-7. *Avyakta* in Katha 1.3.10,11 does not denote pradhana, but the subtle body (and gross body?).

8-10. *Tri rupa aja* in Svet. 4.5 cannot be Pradhana or Prakrti but the transcendental energy of the Supreme Lord who is the cause of all causes.

11-13. *Pancha pancha janah* in Br. 4.4.17 are not the twenty five principles but the five pranas.

14-15. The Supreme intelligent Lord is the cause of the world not the individual soul, but the Supreme Lord.

23-27. The Supreme Lord is not only the nimitta karana (efficient cause) but upadana (material cause) as well.

28. All the passages in Vedanta are referring to the Supreme Lord only.

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ADHYAYA 2

PADA 1

1-2. Sankhya rejected because it is against Shruti.

3. Yoga rejected.

4-11. Objection that non intelligent world cannot be caused by intelligent Supreme Lord (Brahman) is answered. By the effect produced the cause, Lord, is not contaminated.

12. Atomic theory refuted like above.

13. The enjoyer Lord and the enjoyed Jiva are qualitatively one.

14-20. Vaisesika doctrine of effect as something new created from the cause is refuted. The effect is only transformation of the energies of the Lord.

21-23. Brhad 2.4.5, Ch.8.7.1, Br.4.3.35-Jiva is simultaneously one and different from the Lord

24-25. The Lord creates the world by His mere will.

26-29. The Lord creates the world without entirely passing over it, and at the same time remaining one and undivided.

30-31. The Lord, unassisted, can create the world through His variegated transcendental potencies.

32-33. He has no self interest in creating the world (lila).

34-36. The Lord is not to be blamed for the happiness and distress of the jivas—He sanctions results according to the *merits-samsara* is beginningless.

37. The Lord is omniscient and omnipotent and capable of creating the world.

PADA 2

1-10. Refutation of *Sankhya*; non intelligent *pradhana* cannot possibly create or proceed with any activity without the guidance of an intelligent being.

11-17. Refutation of *Vaisesika*; atoms as the cause of creation defeated.

18-32. Refutation of Bauddhas (Buddhists) *bahyarthavadins* (both the material objects *sarvastitvavadins* and their cognitions are real) (realists) *vijnanavadins* (ideas only are real *Yogacharas* external objects apart from (idealists) their cognitions have no independent existence) *sunyavadis* (everything is void) (nihilists)

33-36. Refutation of Jaina.

37-41. Refutation of Pasupata (refuting that Ishvara is only the efficient cause).

42-45. Refutation of Sakta.

PADA 3

1-7. Earth is not co-eternal with Lord but the first effect.

8. Air from earth.

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9. The Lord has no cause.
10-12. Fire from air, water from fire, earth from water.
13. The Lord is the cause of these elements but He is not affected by these elements.
14. The reabsorbtion of the elements is inverse to this order.
15. This is not disturbed by the organs and senses because they are created and destroyed with the elements which they consist.
16. The birth and death belong to the body and not to the Jiva.
17. Jiva is never created.
18. Knowledge is a constitutional character of Jiva.
19-32. Jiva is infinitesimal, has knowledge as his attribute.
33-40. Kartrtva is a natural attribute of Jiva.
41-42. This kartrtva of the Jiva depends upon the Lord.
43-53. The relationship between Jiva and the Lord

PADA 4

1-4. Pranas are created from the Lord.
5-6. They are eleven in number (Jnana-, Karma-indriyas and intelligence).
7. They are anu (subtle).
8. Attributes of pranas transferred (atidesa) to chief vital air.
9-12. Nature and character of the chief vital air.
13. It is subtle (anu).
14-16. It is controlled by the Supreme Lord.
17-19. Pranas are not modifications of the chief vital air, they are independent principles.
20-22. Activity of creation belongs to the Super soul not to the Jiva.

ADHYAYA 3

PADA 1

1-7. Individual Jiva in obtaining a different body continues with the same subtle body.
8-11. The souls who have enjoyed results of pious activities in the moon descend to earth-with an amsa of their previous pious *karmas* for which results cannot be enjoyed in the moon, but must be enjoyed in this planet only—which determines the design of the new body.
12-21. Those who have knowledge (*Vidya*) and who perform sacrifices ascend to moon. For the rest there is the third place, Yama's abode.

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22. The subtle bodies descending from moon, through the ether, air, etc., do not become identical with them, but only resemble them.

23. The entire descent of the soul occupies a very short time only.

24-27. When the souls finally enter into plants and so on they do not participate in the life of the plants but are merely in external contact with them.

PADA 2

1-6. The creation of the dreaming state is also willed by the Supreme Lord—they are real to the extent that they are indications of future (or recollections of past).

7-8. In dreamless sleep the Jiva abides with Super soul within the heart.

9. The soul awakening from the sleep is the same as before, otherwise he won't be remembering past experiences and injunctions of sacrifices.

10. Swoon is midway between sleep and death.

11-21. Supreme Lord is *nirvisesa* because He is *prakrta rupa hina*. The attributes of Jiva and matter do not apply to the Lord. He is not materially affected, being transcendental.

22-26. Supreme Lord possesses infinite number of transcendental attributes beyond limitations.

27-30. Matter is transformation of the Lord's energy-so it is one and in the same time different from Him.

PADA 3

1-4. The cognitions of the Lord, taught by all the Vedantic texts, are identical on account of the non-difference of injunctions (*upasita-vidyat*, etc.).

5. Since the goal is the Supreme Lord wherever there are contradictions and different kinds of processes mentioned in the scriptures, *upasamhara* (tallying) is necessary-actually the process is one and the same. Sandilya Vidya in three passages is one and the same (though various details differ). *Vaisvanara Vidya* (Ch. 5.12.2, *Satapatha* 10.6.1-11) is identical-the process, the goal are same. *Katha* 1.2.15-that word which all the Vedas record. Aitareya 3.2.3.12-Him only the bahvrcas consider in the great hymn, the Adhvaryus in the sacrificial fire, the Chandogas in the mahavrata ceremony.

6-8. The subject of chandogya Vidya (1.1.3) is only the sacred om while the Brhad 1.3 represents the whole udgitha as goal.

9-10. Are all qualities to be included in meditation on the Lord?

11-13. Only the essential and unalterable attributes such as ananda and Jnana are to be taken into account everywhere.

14-26. ——similar subject———.

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27-31. Regarding the soul's freeing himself on death and on liberation.

32-54. Regarding the synthesis of different processes considering the goal.

PADA 4

1-50. The knowledge of Brahman is not subordinate to action, but independent. The ashrama karmani are obligatory for him who does not strive for *mukti balya*, *panditya* and *mauna* are three conditions enjoined for the *Sannyasin*.

51-52. Liberation is either immediately after death or gradual according to the *sadhana*.

ADHYAYA 4

PADA 1

1-2. Meditation on the Lord as enjoined in the scriptures is to be repeated again and again until the realization of the final goal takes place.

3. The goal of meditation is the Lord who is the soul of all.

4. Regarding *pratikopasana*.

5. Supreme Lord is the only object of meditation.

6. In angopasanas the Lord who is ultimately the controller of everything should be the goal.

7-10. Regarding time and place and period of meditation.

11. It should be done favorably beyond conditions.

12. Till death the process should be continued.

13. On liberation no more control by Karma.

14. -same (pious Karma)-

15. Devotional activities prevail

16-17. They promote the origination of knowledge.

19. The realized vidvan may have to pass through several embodied existences before the *arabdhakarya karmas* will have their effects completely exhausted.

PADA 2

1-7. The path of liberation after death.

8-11. Till total liberation the subtle body continues.

12-14. Similar.

15-16. On liberation the elements merge with elements.

17. The conditioned Jiva passes from the heart out of the body. The Jiva liberated passes through the head, through susumna, the 101st vein.

18-19. The liberated soul even if departs at night passes through a ray of light through the sun.

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20-21. Even if departing in daksinayana the liberated soul attains the supreme abode.

PADA 3

1-3. Reconciliation of different accounts given in the *Upanishads* (Ch. 5.10.1, Kaus. 1.3, Br. 6.2.15, etc.) as to the stations of this path and establish the path (deva-yana as opposed to pitr-yana). The stages are Agni, the day, the bright half of the month and *uttarayana*, the year, *Vayu*, *Aditya*, *chandramas*, lightning, *Varuna*, *Indra*, *Prajapati*, and the *Brahman*.

4-6. These places mean the controlling deities.

7-16. Considering the different opinions of the philosophers regarding who is led to what goal.

PADA 4

1-3. The soul on liberation attains to its original nature and does not acquire new attributes.

4. The liberated soul realizes itself as qualitatively one with the Lord.

5-7. Nature of the released soul-has transcendental attributes which are constitutional.

8-9. All his desires are satisfied by exercise of his free will properly.

10-14. The released soul attains a spiritual body (attains body of its own will).

15-16. The liberated soul on attaining constitutional position can exist in many transcendental bodies.

17-22. The liberated soul participates in all the opulences of the Lord, except the power of creating and sustaining the world. He goes back home back to Godhead and never returns.

Two worlds there are in which we live, one the external, the other internal. Human progress has been made, from days of yore, almost in parallel lines along both these worlds. The search began in the external, and man at first wanted to get answers for all the deep problems from outside nature. Man wanted to satisfy his thirst for the beautiful and the sublime from all that surrounded him; he wanted to express himself and all that was within him in the language of the concrete; and grand indeed were the answers he got, most marvellous ideas of God and worship, and most rapturous expressions of the beautiful. Sublime ideas came from the external world indeed.

But the other, opening out for humanity later, laid out before him a universe yet sublimer, yet more beautiful, and infinitely more expansive. In the Karma Kanda portion of the Vedas, we find the most wonderful ideas of religion inculcated, we find the most wonderful ideas about an overruling Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the universe presented before us in language sometimes the most soul-stirring. Most of you perhaps remember the most wonderful Shloka in the *Rig-Veda Samhita* where you get the description

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of chaos, perhaps the sublimest that has ever been attempted yet. In spite of all this, we find it is only a painting of the sublime outside, we find that yet it is gross, that something of matter yet clings to it. Yet we find that it is only the expression of the Infinite in the language of matter, in the language of the finite, it is the infinite of the muscles and not of the mind; it is the infinite of space and not of thought.

Therefore in the second portion of *Jnana Kanda*, we find there is altogether a different procedure. The first was a search in external nature for the truths of the universe; it was an attempt to get the solution of the deep problems of life from the material world. "Whose glory these Himalayas declare". This is a grand idea, but yet it was not grand enough for India.

The Indian mind had to fall back, and the research took a different direction altogether; from the external the search came to the internal, from matter to mind. There arose the cry, "When a man dies, what becomes of him?" "Some say that he exists, others that he is gone; say, O king of Death, what is the truth?" An entirely different procedure we find here. The Indian mind got all that could be had from the external world, but it did not feel satisfied with that; it wanted to search further, to dive into its own soul, and the final answer came.

The Upanishads, or the Vedanta, or the Aranyakas, or Rahasya is the name of this portion of the Vedas. Here we find at once that religion has got rid of all external formalities. Here we find at once that spiritual things are told not in the language of matter, but in the language of the spirit; the superfine in the language of the superfine. No more any grossness attaches to it, no more is there any compromise with things of worldly concern. Bold, brave, beyond the conception of the present day, stand the giant minds of the sages of the Upanishads, declaring the noblest truths that have ever been preached to humanity, without any compromise, without any fear.

This, my countrymen, I want to lay before you. Even the *Jnana Kanda* of the Vedas is a vast ocean; many lives are necessary to understand even a little of it. Truly has it been said of the Upanishads by Ramanuja that they form the head, the shoulders, the crest of the Vedas, and surely enough the Upanishads have become the Bible of modern India. The Hindus have the greatest respect for the *Karma Kanda* of the Vedas, but, for all practical purposes, we know that for ages by Shruti has been meant the Upanishads, and the Upanishads alone.

We know that all our great philosophers, whether *Vyasa*, *Patanjali*, or *Gautama*, and even the father of all philosophy, the great *Kapila* himself, whenever they wanted an authority for what they wrote, every one of them found it in the Upanishads, and nowhere else, for therein are the truths that remain for ever.

There are truths that are true only in a certain line, in a certain direction, under certain circumstances, and for certain times—those that are founded on the institutions of the times. There are other truths which are based on the nature of man himself, and

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which must endure so long as man himself endures. These are the truths that alone can be universal, and in spite of all the changes that have come to India, as to our social surroundings, our methods of dress, our manner of eating, our modes of worship—these universal truths of the Shrutis, the marvellous Vedantic ideas, stand out in their own sublimity, immovable, unvanquishable, deathless, and immortal.

Yet the germs of all the ideas that were developed in the Upanishads had been taught already in the Karma Kanda. The idea of the cosmos which all sects of Vedantists had to take for granted, the psychology which has formed the common basis of all the Indian schools of thought, had there been worked out already and presented before the world. A few words, therefore, about the Karma Kanda are necessary before we begin the spiritual portion, the Vedanta; and first of all we like to explain the sense in which we have used the word Vedanta.

Unfortunately there is the mistaken notion in modern India that the word Vedanta has reference only to the Advaita system; but you must always remember that in modern India the three Prasthanas are considered equally important in the study of all the systems of religion. First of all there are the Revelations, the *Shrutis*, by which we mean the Upaṇishads. Secondly, among our philosophies, the Sutras of Vyasa have the greatest prominence on account of their being the consummation of all the preceding systems of philosophy.

These systems are not contradictory to one another, but one is based on another, and there is a gradual unfolding of the theme which culminates in the Sutras of Vyasa. Then, between the Upanishads and the Sutras, which are the systematising of the marvellous truths of the Vedanta, comes in the Gita, the divine commentary of the Vedanta.

The Upanishads, the Vyasa-*Sutras*, and the *Gita*, therefore, have been taken up by every sect in India that wants to claim authority for orthodoxy, whether dualist, or *Vishishtadvaitist*, or *Advaitist*; the authorities of each of these are the three Prasthanas. We find that a Shankaracharya, or a Ramanuja, or a Madhvacharya, or a Vallabhacharya, or a Chaitanya—any one who wanted to propound a new sect—had to take up these three systems and write only a new commentary on them.

Therefore it would be wrong to confine the word Vedanta only to one system which has arisen out of the Upanishads. All these are covered by the word Vedanta. The Vishishtadvaitist has as much right to be called a Vedantist as the Advaitist; in fact we will go a little further and say that what we really mean by the word Hindu is really the same as Vedantist. We want you to note that these three systems have been current in India almost from time immemorial; for you must not believe that Shankara was the inventor of the Advaita system.

It existed ages before Shankara was born; he was one of its last representatives. So with the Vishishtadvaita system; it had existed ages before Ramanuja appeared, as we already know from the commentaries he has written; so with the dualistic systems that

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have existed side by side with the others. And with my little knowledge, we have come to the conclusion that they do not contradict each other.

Just as in the case of the six Darshanas, we find they are a gradual unfolding of the grand principles whose music beginning far back in the soft low notes, ends in the triumphant blast of the Advaita, so also in these three systems we find the gradual working up of the human mind towards higher and higher ideals till everything is merged in that wonderful unity which is reached in the Advaita system. Therefore these three are not contradictory. On the other hand we are bound to tell you that this has been a mistake committed by not a few. We find that an Advaitist teacher keeps intact those texts which especially teach Advaitism, and tries to interpret the dualistic or qualified non-dualistic texts into his own meaning.

Similarly we find dualistic teachers trying to read their dualistic meaning into Advaitic texts. Our Gurus were great men, yet there is a saying, "Even the faults of a Guru must be told". I am of opinion that in this only they were mistaken. We need not go into text-torturing, we need not go into any sort of religious dishonesty, we need not go into any sort of grammatical twaddle, we need not go about trying to put our own ideas into texts which were never meant for them, but the work is plain and becomes easier, once you understand the marvellous doctrine of *Adhikarabheda*.

It is true that the Upanishads have this one theme before them: "What is that knowing which we know everything else?" In modern language, the theme of the Upanishads is to find an ultimate unity of things. Knowledge is nothing but finding unity in the midst of diversity. Every science is based upon this; all human knowledge is based upon the finding of unity in the midst of diversity; and if it is the task of small fragments of human knowledge, which we call our sciences, to find unity in the midst of a few different phenomena, the task becomes stupendous when the theme before us is to find unity in the midst of this marvellously diversified universe, where prevail unnumbered differences in name and form, in matter and spirit—each thought differing from every other thought, each form differing from every other form.

Yet, to harmonise these many planes and unending *Lokas*, in the midst of this infinite variety to find unity, is the theme of the Upanishads. On the other hand, the old idea of *Arundhati Nyaya* applies. To show a man the fine star Arundhati, one takes the big and brilliant nearest to it, upon which he is asked to fix his eyes first, and then it becomes quite easy to direct his sight to Arundhati. This is the task before us, and to prove my idea I have simply to show you the Upanishads, and you will see it. Nearly every chapter begins with dualistic teaching, Upasana.

God is first taught as some one who is the Creator of this universe, its Preserver, and unto whom everything goes at last. He is one to be worshipped, the Ruler, the Guide of nature, external and internal, yet appearing as if He were outside of nature and external. One step further, and we find the same teacher teaching that this God is not outside of

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nature, but immanent in nature. And at last both ideas are discarded, and whatever is real is He; there is no difference. "Svetaketu, That thou art." That Immanent One is at last declared to be the same that is in the human soul. Here is no compromise; here is no fear of others' opinions. Truth, bold truth, has been taught in bold language, and we need not fear to preach the truth in the same bold language today, and, by the grace of God, we hope at least to be one who dares to be that bold preacher.

To go back to our preliminaries. There are first two things to be understood—one, the psychological aspect common to all the Vedantic schools, and the other, the cosmological aspect. We will first take up the latter. Today we find wonderful discoveries of modern science coming upon us like bolts from the blue, opening our eyes to marvels we never dreamt of.

But many of these are only re-discoveries of what had been found ages ago. It was only the other day that modern science found that even in the midst of the variety of forces there is unity. It has just discovered that what it calls heat, magnetism, electricity, and so forth, are all convertible into one unit force, and as such, it expresses all these by one name, whatever you may choose to call it.

But this has been done even in the Samhita; old and ancient as it is, in it we meet with this very idea of force we were referring to. All the forces, whether you call them gravitation, or attraction, or repulsion, whether expressing themselves as heat, or electricity, or magnetism, are nothing but the variations of that unit energy. Whether they express themselves as thought, reflected from *Antahkarana*, the inner organs of man, or as action from an external organ, the unit from which they spring is what is called Prana. Again, what is Prana? Prana is Spandana or vibration.

When all this universe shall have resolved back into its primal state, what becomes of this infinite force? Do they think that it becomes extinct? Of course not. If it became extinct, what would be the cause of the next wave, because the motion is going in wave forms, rising, falling, rising again, falling again? Here is the word Srishti, which expresses the universe. Mark that the word does not mean creation. I am helpless in talking English; I have to translate the Sanskrit words as best as I can.

It is Srishti, projection. At the end of a cycle, everything becomes finer and finer and is resolved back into the primal state from which it sprang, and there it remains for a time quiescent, ready to spring forth again. That is Srishti, projection. And what becomes of all these forces, the Pranas? They are resolved back into the primal Prana, and this Prana becomes almost motionless—not entirely motionless; and that is what is described in the Vedic Sukta: "It vibrated without vibrations"—*Anidavatam*. There are many technical phrases in the Upanishads difficult to understand.

For instance, take this word Vata; many times it means air and many times motion, and often people confuse one with the other. We must guard against that. And what becomes of what you call matter? The forces permeate all matter; they all dissolve into

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Akasha, from which they again come out; this *Akasha* is the primal matter. Whether you translate it as ether or anything else, the idea is that this *Akasha* is the primal form of matter. This *Akasha* vibrates under the action of Prana, and when the next *Srishti* is coming up, as the vibration becomes quicker, the *Akasha* is lashed into all these wave forms which we call suns, moons, and systems.

We read again: "Everything in this universe has been projected, Prana vibrating." You must mark the word Ejati, because it comes from *Eja*—to vibrate. *Nihsritam*—projected. *Yadidam Kincha*—whatever in this universe.

This is a part of the cosmological side. There are many details working into it. For instance, how the process takes place, how there is first ether, and how from the ether come other things, how that ether begins to vibrate, and from that Vayu comes. But the one idea is here that it is from the finer that the grosser has come. Gross matter is the last to emerge and the most external, and this gross matter had the finer matter before it. Yet we see that the whole thing has been resolved into two, but there is not yet a final unity. There is the unity of force, Prana; there is the unity of matter, called *Akasha*. Is there any unity to be found among them again? Can they be melted into one? Our modern science is mute here, it has not yet found its way out; and if it is doing so, just as it has been slowly finding the same old Prana and the same ancient *Akasha*, it will have to move along the same lines.

The next unity is the omnipresent impersonal Being known by its old mythological name as Brahma, the four-headed Brahma, and psychologically called *Mahat*. This is where the two unite. What is called your mind is only a bit of this *Mahat* caught in the trap of the brain, and the sum total of all minds caught in the meshes of brains is what you call *Samashti*, the aggregate, the universal. Analysis had to go further; it was not yet complete. Here we were each one of us, as it were, a microcosm, and the world taken altogether is the macrocosm. But whatever is in the Vyashti, the particular, we may safely conjecture that a similar thing is happening also outside. If we had the power to analyse our own minds, we might safely conjecture that the same thing is happening in the cosmic mind. What is this mind is the question.

In modern times, in Western countries, as physical science is making rapid progress, as physiology is step by step conquering stronghold after stronghold of old religions, the Western people do not know where to stand, because to their great despair, modern physiology at every step has identified the mind with the brain. But we in India have known that always. That is the first proposition the Hindu boy learns that the mind is matter, only finer. The body is gross, and behind the body is what we call the Sukshma Sharira, the fine body, or mind. This is also material, only finer; and it is not the *Atman*.

I will not translate this word to you in English, because the idea does not exist in Europe; it is untranslatable. The modern attempt of German philosophers is to translate the word *Atman* by the word "Self", and until that word is universally accepted, it is

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impossible to use it. So, call it as Self or anything, it is our *Atman*. This *Atman* is the real man behind. It is the *Atman* that uses the material mind as its instrument, its *Antahkarana*, as is the psychological term for the mind. And the mind by means of a series of internal organs works the visible organs of the body. What is this mind?

It was only the other day that Western philosophers have come to know that the eyes are not the real organs of vision, but that behind these are other organs, the Indriyas, and if these are destroyed, a man may have a thousand eyes, like Indra, but there will be no sight for him. Ay, your philosophy starts with this assumption that by vision is not meant the external vision.

The real vision belongs to the internal organs, the brain-centres inside. You may call them what you like, but it is not that the Indriyas are the eyes, or the nose, or the ears. And the sum total of all these Indriyas plus the *Manas*, *Buddhi*, *Chitta*, *Ahamkara*, etc., is what is called the mind, and if the modern physiologist comes to tell you that the brain is what is called the mind, and that the brain is formed of so many organs, you need not be afraid at all; tell him that your philosophers knew it always; it is one of the very first principles of your religion.

Well then, we have to understand now what is meant by this *Manas*, *Buddhi*, *Chitta*, *Ahamkara*, etc. First of all, let us take *Chitta*. It is the mind-stuff—a part of the *Mahat*—it is the generic name for the mind itself, including all its various states. Suppose on a summer evening, there is a lake, smooth and calm, without a ripple on its surface. And suppose some one throws a stone into this lake.

What happens? First there is the action, the blow given to the water; next the water rises and sends a reaction towards the stone, and that reaction takes the form of a wave. First the water vibrates a little, and immediately sends back a reaction in the form of a wave. The *Chitta* let us compare to this lake, and the external objects are like the stones thrown into it. As soon as it comes in contact with any external object by means of these Indriyas—the Indriyas must be there to carry these external objects inside—there is a vibration, what is called *Manas*, indecisive. Next there is a reaction, the determinative faculty, *Buddhi*, and along with this *Buddhi* flashes the idea of Aham and the external object. Suppose there is a mosquito sitting upon my hand.

This sensation is carried to my *Chitta* and it vibrates a little; this is the psychological *Manas*. Then there is a reaction, and immediately comes the idea that I have a mosquito on my hand and that I shall have to drive it off. Thus these stones are thrown into the lake, but in the case of the lake every blow that comes to it is from the external world, while in the case of the lake of the mind, the blows may either come from the external world or the internal world. This whole series is what is called the *Antahkarana*.

Along with it, you ought to understand one thing more that will help us in understanding the Advaita system later on. It is this. All of you must have seen pearls and most of you know how pearls are formed. A grain of sand enters into the shell of a pearl oyster, and

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sets up an irritation there, and the oyster's body reacts towards the irritation and covers the little particle with its own juice. That crystallises and forms the pearl. So the whole universe is like that, it is the pearl which is being formed by us. What we get from the external world is simply the blow. Even to be conscious of that blow we have to react, and as soon as we react, we really project a portion of our own mind towards the blow, and when we come to know of it, it is really our own mind as it has been shaped by the blow.

Therefore it is clear even to those who want to believe in a hard and fast realism of an external world, which they cannot but admit in these days of physiology—that supposing we represent the external world by "x", what we really know is "x" plus mind, and this mind-element is so great that it has covered the whole of that "x" which has remained unknown and unknowable throughout; and, therefore, if there is an external world, it is always unknown and unknowable. What we know of it is as it is moulded, formed, fashioned by our own mind.

So with the internal world. The same applies to our own soul, the *Atman*. In order to know the *Atman* we shall have to know It through the mind; and, therefore, what little we know of this *Atman* is simply the *Atman* plus the mind. That is to say, the *Atman* covered over, fashioned, and moulded by the mind, and nothing more. We shall return to this a little later, but we will remember what has been told here.

The next thing to understand is this. The question arose that this body is the name of one continuous stream of matter—every moment we are adding material to it, and every moment material is being thrown off by it—like a river continually flowing, vast masses of water always changing places; yet all the same, we take up the whole thing in imagination, and call it the same river. What do we call the river? Every moment the water is changing, the shore is changing, every moment the environment is changing, what is the river then?

It is the name of this series of changes. So with the mind. That is the great *Kshanika Vijnana Vada* doctrine, most difficult to understand, but most rigorously and logically worked out in the Buddhistic philosophy; and this arose in India in opposition to some part of the Vedanta. That had to be answered and we shall see later on how it could only be answered by Advaitism and by nothing else. We will see also how, in spite of people's curious notions about Advaitism, people's fright about Advaitism, it is the salvation of the world, because therein alone is to be found the reason of things. Dualism and other isms are very good as means of worship, very satisfying to the mind, and maybe, they have helped the mind onward; but if man wants to be rational and religious at the same time, Advaita is the one system in the world for him.

Well, now, we shall regard the mind as a similar river, continually filling itself at one end and emptying itself at the other end. Where is that unity which we call the *Atman*? The idea is this, that in spite of this continuous change in the body, and in spite of this

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continuous change in the mind, there is in us something that is unchangeable, which makes our ideas of things appear unchangeable. When rays of light coming from different quarters fall upon a screen, or a wall, or upon something that is not changeable, then and then alone it is possible for them to form a unity, then and then alone it is possible for them to form one complete whole.

Where is this unity in the human organs, falling upon which, as it were, the various ideas will come to unity and become one complete whole? This certainly cannot be the mind itself, seeing that it also changes. Therefore there must be something which is neither the body nor the mind, something which changes not, something permanent, upon which all our ideas, our sensations fall to form a unity and a complete whole; and this is the real soul, the *Atman* of man. And seeing that everything material, whether you call it fine matter, or mind, must be changeful, seeing that what you call gross matter, the external world, must also be changeful in comparison to that—this unchangeable something cannot be of material substance; therefore it is spiritual, that is to say, it is not matter—it is indestructible, unchangeable.

Next will come another question: Apart from those old arguments which only rise in the external world, the arguments in support of design—who created this external world, who created matter, etc.? The idea here is to know truth only from the inner nature of man, and the question arises just in the same way as it arose about the soul. Taking for granted that there is a soul, unchangeable, in each man, which is neither the mind nor the body, there is still a unity of idea among the souls, a unity of feeling, of sympathy. How is it possible that my soul can act upon your soul, where is the medium through which it can work, where is the medium through which it can act? How is it I can feel anything about your souls?

What is it that is in touch both with your soul and my soul? Therefore there is a metaphysical necessity of admitting another soul, for it must be a soul which acts in contact with all the different souls, and in and through matter—one Soul which covers and interpenetrates all the infinite number of souls in the world, in and through which they live, in and through which they sympathise, and love, and work for one another. And this universal Soul is Paramatman, the Lord God of the universe. Again, it follows that because the soul is not made of matter, since it is spiritual, it cannot obey the laws of matter, it cannot be judged by the laws of matter. It is, therefore, unconquerable, birthless, deathless, and changeless.

"This Self, weapons cannot pierce, nor fire can burn, water cannot wet, nor air can dry up. Changeless, all-pervading, unmoving, immovable, eternal is this Self of man." We learn according to the Gita and the Vedanta that this individual Self is also Vibhu, and according to Kapila, is omnipresent. Of course there are sects in India which hold that the Self is Anu, infinitely small; but what they mean is Anu in manifestation; its real nature is Vibhu, all-pervading.

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There comes another idea, startling perhaps, yet a characteristically Indian idea, and if there is any idea that is common to all our sects, it is this. Therefore I beg you to pay attention to this one idea and to remember it, for this is the very foundation of everything that we have in India. The idea is this. You have heard of the doctrine of physical evolution preached in the Western world by the German and the English savants.

It tells us that the bodies of the different animals are really one; the differences that we see are but different expressions of the same series; that from the lowest worm to the highest and the most saintly man it is but one—the one changing into the other, and so on, going up and up, higher and higher, until it attains perfection. We had that idea also. Declares our Yogi Patanjali—One species—the Jati is species—changes into another species—evolution; Parinama means one thing changing into another, just as one species changes into another. Where do we differ from the Europeans? Patanjali says, *Prakrityapurat*," by the infilling of nature".

The European says, it is competition, natural and sexual selection, etc. that forces one body to take the form of another. But here is another idea, a still better analysis, going deeper into the thing and saying, "By the infilling of nature". What is meant by this infilling of nature? We admit that the amoeba goes higher and higher until it becomes a Buddha; we admit that, but we are at the same time as much certain that you cannot get an amount of work out of a machine unless you have put it in some shape or other. The sum total of the energy remains the same, whatever the forms it may take.

If you want a mass of energy at one end, you have got to put it in at the other end; it may be in another form, but the amount of energy that should be produced out of it must be the same. Therefore, if a Buddha is the one end of the change, the very amoeba must have been the Buddha also. If the Buddha is the evolved amoeba, the amoeba was the involved Buddha also. If this universe is the manifestation of an almost infinite amount of energy, when this universe was in a state of Pralaya, it must have represented the same amount of involved energy.

It cannot have been otherwise. As such, it follows that every soul is infinite. From the lowest worm that crawls under our feet to the noblest and greatest saints, all have this infinite power, infinite purity, and infinite everything. Only the difference is in the degree of manifestation. The worm is only manifesting just a little bit of that energy, you have manifested more, another god-man has manifested still more: that is all the difference. But that infinite power is there all the same. Says Patanjali: "Like the peasant irrigating his field."

Through a little corner of his field he brings water from a reservoir somewhere, and perhaps he has got a little lock that prevents the water from rushing into his field. When he wants water, he has simply to open the lock, and in rushes the water of its own power. The power has not to be added, it is already there in the reservoir. So every one of us, every being, has as his own background such a reservoir of strength, infinite power,

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infinite purity, infinite bliss, and existence infinite—only these locks, these bodies, are hindering us from expressing what we really are to the fullest.

And as these bodies become more and more finely organised, as the Tamoguna becomes the Rajoguna, and as the Rajoguna becomes *Sattvaguna*, more and more of this power and purity becomes manifest, and therefore it is that our people have been so careful about eating and drinking, and the food question. It may be that the original ideas have been lost, just as with our marriage—which, though not belonging to the subject, I may take as an example. If we have another opportunity we will talk to you about these; but let me tell you now that the ideas behind our marriage system are the only ideas through which there can be a real civilisation.

There cannot be anything else. If a man or a woman were allowed the freedom to take up any woman or man as wife or husband, if individual pleasure, satisfaction of animal instincts, were to be allowed to run loose in society, the result must be evil, evil children, wicked and demoniacal. The, man in every country is, on the one hand, producing these brutal children, and on the other hand multiplying the police force to keep these brutes down. The question is not how to destroy evil that way, but how to prevent the very birth of evil.

And so long as you live in society your marriage certainly affects every member of it; and therefore society has the right to dictate whom you shall marry, and whom you shall not. And great ideas of this kind have been behind the system of marriage here, what they call the astrological Jati of the bride and bridegroom. And in passing we may remark that according to Manu a child who is born of lust is not an Aryan. The child whose very conception and whose death is according to the rules of the Vedas, such is an Aryan. Yes, and less of these Aryan children are being produced in every country, and the result is the mass of evil which we call Kali Yuga.

But we have lost all these ideals—it is true we cannot carry all these ideas to the fullest length now—it is perfectly true we have made almost a caricature of some of these great ideas. It is lamentably true that the fathers and mothers are not what they were in old times, neither is society so educated as it used to be, neither has society that love for individuals that it used to have. But, however faulty the working out may be, the principle is sound; and if its application has become defective, if one method has failed, take up the principle and work it out better; why kill the principle? The same applies to the food question. The work and details are bad, very bad indeed, but that does not hurt the principle. The principle is eternal and must be there. Work it out afresh and make a re-formed application.

This is the one great idea of the *Atman* which every one of our sects in India has to believe. Only, as we shall find, the dualists preach that this *Atman* by evil works becomes *Sankuchita*, *i.e.* all its powers and its nature become contracted, and by good works again that nature expands. And the Advaitist says that the *Atman* never expands nor contracts,

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but seems to do so. It appears to have become contracted. That is all the difference, but all have the one idea that our *Atman* has all the powers already, not that anything will come to it from outside, not that anything will drop into it from the skies. Mark you, your Vedas are not inspired, but expired, not that they came from anywhere outside, but they are the eternal laws living in every soul.

The Vedas are in the soul of the ant, in the soul of the god. The ant has only to evolve and get the body of a sage or a Rishi, and the Vedas will come out, eternal laws expressing themselves. This is the one great idea to understand that our power is already ours, our salvation is already within us. Say either that it has become contracted, or say that it has been covered with the veil of Maya, it matters little; the idea is there already; you must have to believe in that, believe in the possibility of everybody—that even in the lowest man there is the same possibility as in the Buddha. This is the doctrine of the *Atman*.

But now comes a tremendous fight. Here are the Buddhists, who equally analyse the body into a material stream and as equally analyse the mind into another. And as for this *Atman*, they state that it is unnecessary; so we need not assume the *Atman* at all. What use of a substance, and qualities adhering to the substance? We say, Gunas, qualities, and qualities alone. It is illogical to assume two causes where one will explain the whole thing. And the fight went on, and all the theories which held the doctrine of substance were thrown to the ground by the Buddhists. There was a break-up all along the line of those who held on to the doctrine of substance and qualities, that you have a soul, and I have a soul, and every one has a soul separate from the mind and body, and that each one is an individual.

So far we have seen that the idea of dualism is all right; for there is the body, there is then the fine body—the mind—there is this *Atman*, and in and through all the Atmans is that Paramatman, God. The difficulty is here that this *Atman* and Paramatman are both called substance, to which the mind and body and so-called substances adhere like so many qualities. Nobody has ever seen a substance, none can ever conceive; what is the use of thinking of this substance? Why not become a Kshanikavadin and say that whatever exists is this succession of mental currents and nothing more?

They do not adhere to each other, they do not form a unit, one is chasing the other, like waves in the ocean, never complete, never forming one unit-whole. Man is a succession of waves, and when one goes away it generates another, and the cessation of these wave-forms is what is called *Nirvana*. You see that dualism is mute before this; it is impossible that it can bring up any argument, and the dualistic God also cannot be retained here.

The idea of a God that is omnipresent, and yet is a person who creates without hands, and moves without feet, and so on, and who has created the universe as a *Kumbakara* (potter) creates a Ghata (pot), the Buddhist declares, is childish, and that if this is God, he is going to fight this God and not worship it. This universe is full of misery; if it is

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the work of a God, we are going to fight this God. And secondly, this God is illogical and impossible, as all of you are aware. We need not go into the defects of the "design theory", as all our *Kshanikas* have shown them full well; and so this Personal God fell to pieces.

Truth, and nothing but truth, is the watchword of the Advaitist. "Truth alone triumphs, and not untruth. Through truth alone the way to gods, Devayana, lies." Everybody marches forward under that banner; ay, but it is only to crush the weaker man's position by his own. You come with your dualistic idea of God to pick a quarrel with a poor man who is worshipping an image, and you think you are wonderfully rational, you can confound him; but if he turns round and shatters your own Personal God and calls that an imaginary ideal, where are you? You fall back on faith and so on, or raise the cry of atheism, the old cry of a weak man—whosoever defeats him is an atheist.

If you are to be rational, be rational all along the line, and if not, allow others the same privilege which you ask for yourselves. How can you prove the existence of this God? On the other hand, it can be almost disproved. There is not a shadow of a proof as to His existence, and there are very strong arguments to the contrary. How will you prove His existence, with your God, and His Gunas, and an infinite number of souls which are substance, and each soul an individual?

In what are you an individual? You are not as a body, for you know today better than even the Buddhists of old knew that what may have been matter in the sun has just now become matter in you, and will go out and become matter in the plants; then where is your individuality, Mr. So-and-so? The same applies to the mind. Where is your individuality? You have one thought tonight and another tomorrow. You do not think the same way as you thought when you were a child; and old men do not think the same way as they did when they were young. Where is your individuality then? Do not say it is in consciousness, this *Ahamkara*, because this only covers a small part of your existence. While I am talking to you, all my organs are working and I am not conscious of it. If consciousness is the proof of existence they do not exist then, because I am not conscious of them. Where are you then with your Personal God theories? How can you prove such a God?

Again, the Buddhists will stand up and declare—not only is it illogical, but immoral, for it teaches man to be a coward and to seek assistance outside, and nobody can give him such help. Here is the universe, man made it; why then depend on an imaginary being outside whom nobody ever saw, or felt, or got help from? Why then do you make cowards of yourselves and teach your children that the highest state of man is to be like a dog, and go crawling before this imaginary being, saying that you are weak and impure, and that you are everything vile in this universe?

On the other hand, the Buddhists may urge not only that you tell a lie, but that you bring a tremendous amount of evil upon your children; for, mark you, this world is one of hypnotisation. Whatever you tell yourself, that you become. Almost the first words the great Buddha uttered were: "What you think, that you are; what you will think, that you

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will be." If this is true, do not teach yourself that you are nothing, ay, that you cannot do anything unless you are helped by somebody who does not live here, but sits above the clouds. The result will be that you will be more and more weakened every day. By constantly repeating, "we are very impure, Lord, make us pure", the result will be that you will hypnotise yourselves into all sorts of vices.

The Buddhists say that ninety per cent of these vices that you see in every society are on account of this idea of a Personal God; this is an awful idea of the human being that the end and aim of this expression of life, this wonderful expression of life, is to become like a dog. Says the Buddhist to the Vaishnava, if your ideal, your aim and goal is to go to the place called Vaikuntha where God lives, and there stand before Him with folded hands all through eternity, it is better to commit suicide than do that. The Buddhists may even urge that, that is why he is going to create annihilation, *Nirvana*, to escape this. I am putting these ideas before you as a Buddhist just for the time being, because nowadays all these Advaitic ideas are said to make you immoral, and I am trying to tell you how the other side looks. Let us face both sides boldly and bravely.

We have seen first of all that this cannot be proved, this idea of a Personal God creating the world; is there any child that can believe this today? Because a Kumbhara creates a Ghata, therefore a God created the world! If this is so, then your Kumbhara is God also; and if any one tells you that He acts without head and hands, you may take him to a lunatic asylum. Has ever your Personal God, the Creator of the world to whom you cry all your life, helped you—is the next challenge from modern science.

They will prove that any help you have had could have been got by your own exertions, and better still, you need not have spent your energy in that crying, you could have done it better without that weeping and crying. And we have seen that along with this idea of a Personal God comes tyranny and priest-craft. Tyranny and priest-craft have prevailed wherever this idea existed, and until the lie is knocked on the head, say the Buddhists, tyranny will not cease. So long as man thinks he has to cower before a supernatural being, so long there will be priests to claim rights and privileges and to make men cower before them, while these poor men will continue to ask some priest to act as interceder for them. You may do away with the Brahmin, but mark me, those who do so will put themselves in his place and will be worse, because the Brahmin has a certain amount of generosity in him, but these upstarts are always the worst of tyrannisers.

If a beggar gets wealth, he thinks the whole world is a bit of straw. So these priests there must be, so long as this Personal God idea persists, and it will be impossible to think of any great morality in society. Priestcraft and tyranny go hand in hand. Why was it invented? Because some strong men in old times got people into their hands and said, you must obey us or we will destroy you. That was the long and short of it. It is the idea of the thunderer who kills every one who does not obey him. Next the Buddhist says, you have been perfectly rational up to this point, that everything is the result of the law of

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Karma. You believe in an infinity of souls, and that souls are without birth or death, and this infinity of souls and the belief in the law of Karma are perfectly logical no doubt. There cannot be a cause without an effect, the present must have had its cause in the past and will have its effect in the future.

The Hindu says the Karma is Jada (inert) and not Chaitanya (Spirit), therefore some Chaitanya is necessary to bring this cause to fruition. Is it so, that Chaitanya is necessary to bring the plant to fruition? If I plant the seed and add water, no Chaitanya is necessary. You may say there was some original Chaitanya there, but the souls themselves were the Chaitanya, nothing else is necessary. If human souls have it too, what necessity is there for a God, as say the Jains, who, unlike the Buddhists, believe in souls and do not believe in God. Where are you logical, where are you moral? And when you criticise Advaitism and fear that it will make for immorality, just read a little of what has been done in India by dualistic sects.

If there have been twenty thousand Advaitist blackguards, there have also been twenty thousand Dvaitist blackguards. Generally speaking, there will be more Dvaitist blackguards, because it takes a better type of mind to understand Advaitism, and Advaitists can scarcely be frightened into anything. What remains for you Hindus, then? There is no help for you out of the clutches of the Buddhists. You may quote the Vedas, but he does not believe in them. He will say, "My Tripitakas say otherwise, and they are without beginning or end, not even written by Buddha, for Buddha says he is only reciting them; they are eternal." And he adds, "Yours are wrong, ours are the true Vedas, yours are manufactured by the Brahmin priests, therefore out with them." How do you escape?

Here is the way to get out. Take up the first objection, the metaphysical one, that substance and qualities are different. Says the Advaitist, they are not. There is no difference between substance and qualities. You know the old illustration, how the rope is taken for the snake, and when you see the snake you do not see the rope at all, the rope has vanished. Dividing the thing into substance and quality is a metaphysical something in the brains of philosophers, for never can they be in effect outside. You see qualities if you are an ordinary man, and substance if you are a great Yogi, but you never see both at the same time.

So, Buddhists, your quarrel about substance and qualities has been but a miscalculation which does not stand on fact. But if substance is unqualified, there can only be one. If you take qualities off from the soul, and show that these qualities are in the mind really, superimposed on the soul, then there can never be two souls for it is qualification that makes the difference between one soul and another. How do you know that one soul is different from the other? Owing to certain differentiating marks, certain qualities. And where qualities do not exist, how can there be differentiation? Therefore there are not two souls, there is but One, and your Paramatman is unnecessary, it is this very soul. That One is called Paramatman, that very One is called Jivatman, and so on; and you

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dualists, such as the Sankhyas and others, who say that the soul is Vibhu, omnipresent, how can you make two infinites? There can be only one. What else? This One is the one Infinite *Atman*, everything else is its manifestation. There the Buddhist stops, but there it does not end.

The Advaitist position is not merely a weak one of criticism. The Advaitist criticises others when they come too near him, and just throws them away, that is all; but he propounds his own position. He is the only one that criticises, and does not stop with criticism and showing books. Here you are. You say the universe is a thing of continuous motion. In Vyashti (the finite) everything is moving; you are moving, the table is moving, motion everywhere; it is Samsara, continuous motion; it is Jagat. Therefore there cannot be an individuality in this Jagat, because individuality means that which does not change; there cannot be any changeful individuality, it is a contradiction in terms. There is no such thing as individuality in this little world of ours, the Jagat. Thought and feeling, mind and body, men and animals and plants are in a continuous state of flux. But suppose you take the universe as a unit whole; can it change or move? Certainly not.

Motion is possible in comparison with something which is a little less in motion or entirely motionless. The universe as a whole, therefore, is motionless, unchangeable. You are therefore, an individual then and then alone when you are the whole of it, when the realisation of "I am the universe" comes. That is why the Vedantist says that so long as there are two, fear does not cease. It is only when one does not see another, does not feel another, when it is all one—then alone fear ceases, then alone death vanishes, then alone Samsara vanishes. Advaita teaches us, therefore, that man is individual in being universal, and not in being particular.

You are immortal only when you are the whole. You are fearless and deathless only when you are the universe; and then that which you call the universe is the same as that you call God, the same that you call existence, the same that you call the whole. It is the one undivided Existence which is taken to be the manifold world which we see, as also others who are in the same state of mind as we. People who have done a little better Karma and get a better state of mind, when they die, look upon it as *Svarga* and see Indras and so forth. People still higher will see it, the very same thing, as Brahma-Loka, and the perfect ones will neither see the earth nor the heavens, nor any Loka at all. The universe will have vanished, and Brahman will be in its stead.

Can we know this Brahman? I have told you of the painting of the Infinite in the Samhita. Here we shall find another side shown, the infinite internal. That was the infinite of the muscles. Here we shall have the Infinite of thought. There the Infinite was attempted to be painted in language positive; here that language failed and the attempt has been to paint it in language negative. Here is this universe, and even admitting that it is Brahman, can we know it? No! No! You must understand this one thing again very clearly. Again and again this doubt will come to you: If this is Brahman, how can we know

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it? "By what can the knower be known?" How can the knower be known? The eyes see everything; can they see themselves? They cannot. The very fact of knowledge is a degradation. Children of the Aryans, you must remember this, for herein lies a big story. All the Western temptations that come to you, have their metaphysical basis on that one thing—there is nothing higher than sense-knowledge.

In the East, we say in our Vedas that this knowledge is lower than the thing itself, because it is always a limitation. When you want to know a thing, it immediately becomes limited by your mind. They say, refer back to that instance of the oyster making a pearl and see how knowledge is limitation, gathering a thing, bringing it into consciousness, and not knowing it as a whole. This is true about all knowledge, and can it be less so about the Infinite? Can you thus limit Him who is the substance of all knowledge, Him who is the Sakshi, the witness, without whom you cannot have any knowledge, Him who has no qualities, who is the Witness of the whole universe, the Witness in our own souls? How can you know Him? By what means can you bind Him up? Everything, the whole universe, is such a false attempt. This infinite *Atman* is, as it were, trying to see His own face, and all, from the lowest animals to the highest of gods, are like so many mirrors to reflect Himself in, and He is taking up still others, finding them insufficient, until in the human body He comes to know that it is the finite of the finite, all is finite, there cannot be any expression of the Infinite in the finite.

Then comes the retrograde march, and this is what is called renunciation, Vairagya. Back from the senses, back! Do not go to the senses is the watchword of Vairagya. This is the watchword of all morality, this is the watchword of all well-being; for you must remember that with us the universe begins in Tapasya, in renunciation, and as you go back and back, all the forms are being manifested before you, and they are left aside one after the other until you remain what you really are. This is Moksha or liberation.

This idea we have to understand: "How to know the knower?" The knower cannot be known, because if it were known, it will not be the knower. If you look at your eyes in a mirror, the reflection is no more your eyes, but something else, only a reflection. Then if this Soul, this Universal, Infinite Being which you are, is only a witness, what good is it? It cannot live, and move about, and enjoy the world, as we do. People cannot understand how the witness can enjoy. "Oh," they say, "you Hindus have become quiescent, and good for nothing, through this doctrine that you are witnesses!" First of all, it is only the witness that can enjoy. If there is a wrestling match, who enjoys it, those who take part in it, or those who are looking on—the outsiders? The more and more you are the witness of anything in life, the more you enjoy it. And this is Ananda; and, therefore, infinite bliss can only be yours when you have become the witness of this universe; then alone you are a Mukta Purusha. It is the witness alone that can work without any desire, without any idea of going to heaven, without any idea of blame, without any idea of praise. The witness alone enjoys, and none else.

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Coming to the moral aspect, there is one thing between the metaphysical and the moral aspect of Advaitism; it is the theory of Maya. Everyone of these points in the Advaita system requires years to understand and months to explain. Therefore you will excuse me if I only just touch them en passant. This theory of Maya has been the most difficult thing to understand in all ages. Let me tell you in a few words that it is surely no theory, it is the combination of the three ideas *Desha-Kala-Nimitta*—space, time, and causation—and this time and space and cause have been further reduced into Nama-Rupa. Suppose there is a wave in the ocean.

The wave is distinct from the ocean only in its form and name, and this form and this name cannot have any separate existence from the wave; they exist only with the wave. The wave may subside, but the same amount of water remains, even if the name and form that were on the wave vanish for ever. So this Maya is what makes the difference between me and you, between all animals and man, between gods and men. In fact, it is this Maya that causes the *Atman* to be caught, as it were, in so many millions of beings, and these are distinguishable only through name and form. If you leave it alone, let name and form go, all this variety vanishes for ever, and you are what you really are. This is Maya.

It is again no theory, but a statement of facts. When the realist states that this table exists, what he means is, that this table has an independent existence of its own, that it does not depend on the existence of anything else in the universe, and if this whole universe be destroyed and annihilated, this table will remain just as it is now. A little thought will show you that it cannot be so. Everything here in the sense-world is dependent and interdependent, relative and correlative, the existence of one depending on the other. There are three steps, therefore, in our knowledge of things; the first is that each thing is individual and separate from every other; and the next step is to find that there is a relation and correlation between all things; and the third is that there is only one thing which we see as many.

The first idea of God with the ignorant is that this God is somewhere outside the universe, that is to say, the conception of God is extremely human; He does just what a man does, only on a bigger and higher scale. And we have seen how that idea of God is proved in a few words to be unreasonable and insufficient. And the next idea is the idea of a power we see manifested everywhere. This is the real Personal God we get in the Chandi, but, mark me, not a God that you make the reservoir of all good qualities only. You cannot have two Gods, God and Satan; you must have only one and dare to call Him good and bad. Have only one and take the logical consequences. We read in the Chandi: "We salute Thee, O Divine Mother, who lives in every being as peace.

We salute Thee, O Divine Mother, who lives in all beings as purity." At the same time we must take the whole consequence of calling Him the All-formed. "All this is bliss, O Gargi; wherever there is bliss there is a portion of the Divine." You may use it how you

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like. In this light before me, you may give a poor man a hundred rupees, and another man may forge your name, but the light will be the same for both. This is the second stage. And the third is that God is neither outside nature nor inside nature, but God and nature and soul and universe are all convertible terms.

You never see two things; it is your metaphysical words that have deluded you. You assume that you are a body and have a soul, and that you are both together. How can that be? Try in your own mind. If there is a Yogi among you, he knows himself as Chaitanya, for him the body has vanished. An ordinary man thinks of himself as a body; the idea of spirit has vanished from him; but because the metaphysical ideas exist that man has a body and a soul and all these things, you think they are all simultaneously there. One thing at a time. Do not talk of God when you see matter; you see the effect and the effect alone, and the cause you cannot see, and the moment you can see the cause, the effect will have vanished. Where is the world then, and who has taken it off?

"One that is present always as consciousness, the bliss absolute, beyond all bounds, beyond all compare, beyond all qualities, ever-free, limitless as the sky, without parts, the absolute, the perfect—such a Brahman, O sage, O learned one, shines in the heart of the Jnani in Samadhi. (Vivekachudamani, 408)

"Where all the changes of nature cease for ever, who is thought beyond all thoughts, who is equal to all yet having no equal, immeasurable, whom the Vedas declare, who is the essence in what we call our existence, the perfect—such a Brahman, O Sage, O learned one, shines in the heart of the Jnani in Samadhi. (Ibid.,409)

"Beyond all birth and death, the Infinite One, incomparable, like the whole universe deluged in water in Mahapralaya—water above, water beneath, water on all sides, and on the face of that water not a wave, not a ripple—silent and calm, all visions have died out, all fights and quarrels and the war of fools and saints have ceased for ever—such a Brahman, O sage, O learned one, shines in the heart of the Jnani in Samadhi." (Ibid., 410)

That also comes, and when that comes the world has vanished.

We have seen then that this Brahman, this Reality is unknown and unknowable, not in the sense of the agnostic, but because to know Him would be a blasphemy, because you are He already. We have also seen that this Brahman is not this table and yet is this table. Take off the name and form, and whatever is reality is He. He is the reality in everything.

"Thou art the woman, thou the man, thou art the boy, and the girl as well, thou the old man supporting thyself on a stick, thou art all in all in the universe." That is the theme of Advaitism. A few words more. Herein lies, we find, the explanation of the essence of things. We have seen how here alone we can take a firm stand against all the onrush of logic and scientific knowledge. Here at least reason has a firm foundation, and, at the

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same time, the Indian Vedantist does not curse the preceding steps; he looks back and he blesses them, and he knows that they were true, only wrongly perceived, and wrongly stated.

They were the same truth, only seen through the glass of Maya, distorted it may be—yet truth, and nothing but truth. The same God whom the ignorant man saw outside nature, the same whom the little-knowing man saw as interpenetrating the universe, and the same whom the sage realises as his own Self, as the whole universe itself—all are One and the same Being, the same entity seen from different standpoints, seen through different glasses of Maya, perceived by different minds, and all the difference was caused by that. Not only so, but one view must lead to the other.

What is the difference between science and common knowledge? Go out into the streets in the dark, and if something unusual is happening there, ask one of the passers-by what is the cause of it. It is ten to one that he will tell you it is a ghost causing the phenomenon. He is always going after ghosts and spirits outside, because it is the nature of ignorance to seek for causes outside of effects. If a stone falls, it has been thrown by a devil or a ghost, says the ignorant man, but the scientific man says it is the law of nature, the law of gravitation.

What is the fight between science and religion everywhere? Religions are encumbered with such a mass of explanations which come from outside—one angel is in charge of the sun, another of the moon, and so on ad infinitum. Every change is caused by a spirit, the one common point of agreement being that they are all outside the thing. Science means that the cause of a thing is sought out by the nature of the thing itself. As step by step science is progressing, it has taken the explanation of natural phenomena out of the hands of spirits and angels. Because Advaitism has done likewise in spiritual matters, it is the most scientific religion. This universe has not been created by any extra-cosmic God, nor is it the work of any outside genius. It is self-creating, self-dissolving, self-manifesting, One Infinite Existence, the Brahman. *Tattvamasi Shvetaketo*—"That thou art, O Shvetaketu!"

Thus you see that this, and this alone, and none else, can be the only scientific religion. And with all the prattle about science that is going on daily at the present time in modern half-educated India, with all the talk about rationalism and reason that I hear every day, I expect that whole sects of you will come over and dare to be Advaitists, and dare to preach it to the world in the words of Buddha, "For the good of many, for the happiness of many." If you do not, I take you for cowards. If you cannot get over your cowardice, if your fear is your excuse, allow the same liberty to others, do not try to break up the poor idol-worshipper, do not call him a devil, do not go about preaching to every man that does not agree entirely with you. Know first, that you are cowards yourselves, and if society frightens you, if your own superstitions of the past frighten you so much, how much more will these superstitions frighten and bind down those who are ignorant? That is the

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Advaita position. Have mercy on others. Would to God that the whole world were Advaitists tomorrow, not only in theory, but in realisation. But if that cannot be, let us do the next best thing; let us take the ignorant by the hand, lead them always step by step just as they can go, and know that every step in all religious growth in India has been progressive. It is not from bad to good, but from good to better.

Something more has to be told about the moral relation. Our boys blithely talk nowadays; they learn from somebody—the Lord knows from whom—that Advaita makes people immoral, because if we are all one and all God, what need of morality will there be at all! In the first place, that is the argument of the brute, who can only be kept down by the whip. If you are such brutes, commit suicide rather than pass for human beings who have to kept down by the whip. If the whip is taken away, you will all be demons! You ought all to be killed if such is the case. There is no help for you; you must always be living under this whip and rod, and there is no salvation, no escape for you.

In the second place, Advaita and Advaita alone explains morality. Every religion preaches that the essence of all morality is to do good to others. And why? Be unselfish. And why should I? Some God has said it? He is not for me. Some texts have declared it? Let them; that is nothing to me; let them all tell it. And if they do, what is it to me? Each one for himself, and somebody take the hindermost—that is all the morality in the world, at least with many. What is the reason that I should be moral? You cannot explain it except when you come to know the truth as given in the Gita: "He who sees everyone in himself, and himself in everyone, thus seeing the same God living in all, he, the sage, no more kills the Self by the self." Know through Advaita that whomsoever you hurt, you hurt yourself; they are all you.

Whether you know it or not, through all hands you work, through all feet you move, you are the king enjoying in the palace, you are the beggar leading that miserable existence in the street; you are in the ignorant as well as in the learned, you are in the man who is weak, and you are in the strong; know this and be sympathetic. And that is why we must not hurt others. That is why I do not even care whether I have to starve, because there will be millions of mouths eating at the same time, and they are all mine. Therefore I should not care what becomes of me and mine, for the whole universe is mine, I am enjoying all the bliss at the same time; and who can kill me or the universe? Herein is morality. Here, in Advaita alone, is morality explained. The others teach it, but cannot give you its reason. Then, so far about explanation.

What is the gain? It is strength. Take off that veil of hypnotism which you have cast upon the world, send not out thoughts and words of weakness unto humanity. Know that all sins and all evils can be summed up in that one word, weakness. It is weakness that is the motive power in all evil doing; it is weakness that is the source of all selfishness; it is weakness that makes men injure others; it is weakness that makes them manifest what they are not in reality. Let them all know what they are; let them repeat day and

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night what they are. Soham. Let them suck it in with their mothers' milk, this idea of strength—I am He, I am He. This is to be heard first, etc. And then let them think of it, and out of that thought, out of that heart will proceed works such as the world has never seen. What has to be done? And, this Advaita is said by some to be impracticable; that is to say, it is not yet manifesting itself on the material plane. To a certain extent that is true, for remember the saying of the Vedas:

"Om, this is the Brahman; Om, this is the greatest reality; he who knows the secret of this Om, whatever he desires that he gets." Ay, therefore first know the secret of this Om, that you are the Om; know the secret of this *Tattvamasi*, and then and then alone whatever you want shall come to you. If you want to be great materially, believe that you are so. I may be a little bubble, and you may be a wave mountain-high, but know that for both of us the infinite ocean is the background, the infinite Brahman is our magazine of power and strength, and we can draw as much as we like, both of us, I the bubble and you the mountain-high wave. Believe, therefore, in yourselves. The secret of Advaita is: Believe in yourselves first, and then believe in anything else.

In the history of the world, you will find that only those nations that have believed in themselves have become great and strong. In the history of each nation, you will always find that only those individuals who have believed in themselves have become great and strong. Here, to India, came an Englishman who was only a clerk, and for want of funds and other reasons he twice tried to blow his brains out; and when he failed, he believed in himself, he believed that he was born to do great things; and that man became Lord Clive, the founder of the Empire. If he had believed the *Padres* and gone crawling all his life—"O Lord, I am weak, and I am low"—where would he have been? In a lunatic asylum. You also are made lunatics by these evil teachings. I have seen, all the world over, the bad effects of these weak teachings of humility destroying the human race. Our children are brought up in this way, and is it a wonder that they become semi-lunatics?

This is teaching on the practical side. Believe, therefore, in yourselves, and if you want material wealth, work it out; it will come to you. If you want to be intellectual, work it out on the intellectual plane, and intellectual giants you shall be. And if you want to attain to freedom, work it out on the spiritual plane, and free you shall be and shall enter into *Nirvana*, the Eternal Bliss. But one defect which lay in the Advaita was its being worked out so long on the spiritual plane only, and nowhere else; now the time has come when you have to make it practical.

It shall no more be a Rahasya, a secret, it shall no more live with monks in cave and forests, and in the Himalayas; it must come down to the daily, everyday life of the people; it shall be worked out in the palace of the king, in the cave of the recluse; it shall be worked out in the cottage of the poor, by the beggar in the street, everywhere; anywhere it can be worked out. Therefore do not fear whether you are a woman or a Shudra, for this religion is so great, says Lord Krishna, that even a little of it brings a great amount of good.

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Therefore, children of the Aryans, do not sit idle; awake, arise, and stop not till the goal is reached. The time has come when this Advaita is to be worked out practically. Let us bring it down from heaven unto the earth; this is the present dispensation. And, the voices of our forefathers of old are telling us to bring it down from heaven to the earth. Let your teachings permeate the world, till they have entered into every pore of society, till they have become the common property of everybody, till they have become part and parcel of our lives, till they have entered into our veins and tingle with every drop of blood there.

You may be astonished to hear that as practical Vedantists the Americans are better than we are. I used to stand on the seashore at New York and look at the immigrants coming from different countries—crushed, downtrodden, hopeless, unable to look a man in the face, with a little bundle of clothes as all their possession, and these all in rags; if they saw a policeman they were afraid and tried to get to the other side of the foot-path. And, mark you, in six months those very men were walking erect, well clothed, looking everybody in the face; and what made this wonderful difference? Say, this man comes from Armenia or somewhere else where he was crushed down beyond all recognition, where everybody told him he was a born slave and born to remain in a low state all his life, and where at the least move on his part he was trodden upon.

There everything told him, as it were, "Slave! you are a slave, remain so. Hopeless you were born, hopeless you must remain." Even the very air murmured round him, as it were, "There is no hope for you; hopeless and a slave you must remain", while the strong man crushed the life out of him. And when he landed in the streets of New York, he found a gentleman, well-dressed, shaking him by the hand; it made no difference that the one was in rags and the other well-clad. He went a step further and saw a restaurant, that there were gentlemen dining at a table, and he was asked to take a seat at the corner of the same table.

He went about and found a new life, that there was a place where he was a man among men. Perhaps he went to Washington, shook hands with the President of the United States, and perhaps there he saw men coming from distant villages, peasants, and ill-clad, all shaking hands with the President. Then the veil of Maya slipped away from him. He is Brahman, he who has been hypnotised into slavery and weakness is once more awake, and he rises up and finds himself a man in a world of men.

In this country of ours, the very birth-place of the Vedanta, our masses have been hypnotised for ages into that state. To touch them is pollution, to sit with them is pollution! Hopeless they were born, hopeless they must remain! And the result is that they have been sinking, sinking, sinking, and have come to the last stage to which a human being can come. For what country is there in the world where man has to sleep with the cattle? And for this, blame nobody else, do not commit the mistake of the ignorant. The effect is here and the cause is here too. We are to blame. Stand up, be bold, and take the blame

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on your own shoulders. Do not go about throwing mud at others; for all the faults you suffer from, you are the sole and only cause.

Young men of Lahore, understand this, therefore, this great sin, hereditary and national, is on our shoulders. There is no hope for us. You may make thousands of societies, twenty thousand political assemblages, fifty thousand institutions. These will be of no use until there is that sympathy, that love, that heart that thinks for all; until Buddha's heart comes once more into India, until the words of the Lord Krishna are brought to their practical use, there is no hope for us. You go on imitating the Europeans and their societies and their assemblages, but let me tell you a story, a fact that I saw with my own eyes.

A company of Burmans was taken over to London by some persons here, who turned out to be Eurasians. They exhibited these people in London, took all the money, and then took these Burmans over to the Continent, and left them there for good or evil. These poor people did not know a word of any European language, but the English Consul in Austria sent them over to London. They were helpless in London, without knowing anyone. But an English lady got to know of them, took these foreigners from Burma into her own house, gave them her own clothes, her bed, and everything, and then sent the news to the papers.

And, mark you, the next day the whole nation was, as it were, roused. Money poured in, and these people were helped out and sent back to Burma. On this sort of sympathy are based all their political and other institutions; it is the rock-foundation of love, for themselves at least. They may not love the world; and the Burmans may be their enemies, but in England, it goes without saying, there is this great love for their own people, for truth and justice and charity to the stranger at the door. Where is the heart here to build upon? No sooner do we start a little joint-stock company than we try to cheat each other, and the whole thing comes down with a crash. You talk of imitating the English and building up as big a nation as they are. But where are the foundations? Ours are only sand, and, therefore, the building comes down with a crash in no time.

Therefore, young men of Lahore, raise once more that mighty banner of Advaita, for on no other ground can you have that wonderful love until you see that the same Lord is present everywhere. Unfurl that banner of love! "Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached." Arise, arise once more, for nothing can be done without renunciation. If you want to help others, your little self must go. In the words of the Christians—you cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time. Have Vairagya. Your ancestors gave up the world for doing great things.

At the present time there are men who give up the world to help their own salvation. Throw away everything, even your own salvation, and go and help others. Ay, you are always talking bold words, but here is practical Vedanta before you. Give up this little life of yours. What matters it if you die of starvation—you and I and thousands like us—so long as this nation lives? The nation is sinking, the curse of unnumbered millions is

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on our heads—those to whom we have been giving ditch-water to drink when they have been dying of thirst and while the perennial river of water was flowing past, the unnumbered millions whom we have allowed to starve in sight of plenty, the unnumbered millions to whom we have talked of Advaita and whom we have hated with all our strength, the unnumbered millions for whom we have invented the doctrine of Lokachara (usage), to whom we have talked theoretically that we are all the same and all are one with the same Lord, without even an ounce of practice.

"Yet, my friends, it must be only in the mind and never in practice!" Wipe off this blot. "Arise and awake." What matters it if this little life goes? Everyone has to die, the saint or the sinner, the rich or the poor. The body never remains for anyone. Arise and awake and be perfectly sincere. Our insincerity in India is awful; what we want is character, that steadiness and character that make a man cling on to a thing like grim death.

"Let the sages blame or let them praise, let Lakshmi come today or let her go away, let death come just now or in a hundred years; he indeed is the sage who does not make one false step from the right path." Arise and awake, for the time is passing and all our energies will be frittered away in vain talking. Arise and awake, let minor things, and quarrels over little details and fights over little doctrines be thrown aside, for here is the greatest of all works, here are the sinking millions. When the Mohammedans first came into India, what a great number of Hindus were here; but mark, how today they have dwindled down! Every day they will become less and less till they wholly disappear.

Let them disappear, but with them will disappear the marvellous ideas, of which, with all their defects and all their misrepresentations, they still stand as representatives. And with them will disappear this marvellous Advaita, the crest-jewel of all spiritual thought. Therefore, arise, awake, with your hands stretched out to protect the spirituality of the world. And first of all, work it out for your own country. What we want is not so much spirituality as a little of the bringing down of the Advaita into the material world.

First bread and then religion. We stuff them too much with religion, when the poor fellows have been starving. No dogmas will satisfy the cravings of hunger. There are two curses here: first our weakness, secondly, our hatred, our dried-up hearts. You may talk doctrines by the millions, you may have sects by the hundreds of millions; ay, but it is nothing until you have the heart to feel. Feel for them as your Veda teaches you, till you find they are parts of your own bodies, till you realise that you and they, the poor and the rich, the saint and the sinner, are all parts of One Infinite Whole, which you call Brahman.

Modern science and its sledge-hammer blows are pulverising the porcelain foundations of all dualistic religions everywhere. Not only here are the dualists torturing texts till they will extend no longer—for texts are not India-rubber—it is not only here that they are trying to get into the nooks and corners to protect themselves; it is still more so in

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Europe and America. And even there something of this idea will have to go from India. It has already got there. It will have to grow and increase and save their civilisations too. For in the West the old order of things is vanishing, giving way to a new order of things, which is the worship of gold, the worship of Mammon.

Thus this old crude system of religion was better than the modern system, namely—competition and gold. No nation, however strong, can stand on such foundations, and the history of the world tells us that all that had such foundations are dead and gone. In the first place we have to stop the incoming of such a wave in India. Therefore preach the Advaita to every one, so that religion may withstand the shock of modern science. Not only so, you will have to help others; your thought will help out Europe and America. But above all, let me once more remind you that here is need of practical work, and the first part of that is that you should go to the sinking millions of India, and take them by the hand, remembering the words of the Lord Krishna:

"Even in this life they have conquered relative existence whose minds are firm-fixed on the sameness of everything, for God is pure and the same to all; therefore, such are said to be living in God."

Practical Vedanta 1

A very renoun scholar and historian has presented his views and exkperience about the Vedanta in the following pages:

If we have to say something about the practical position of the Vedanta philosophy. As we have told you, theory is very good indeed, but how are we to carry it into practice? If it be absolutely impracticable, no theory is of any value whatever, except as intellectual gymnastics. The Vedanta, therefore, as a religion must be intensely practical. We must be able to carry it out in every part of our lives. And not only this, the fictitious differentiation between religion and the life of the world must vanish, for the Vedanta teaches oneness—one life throughout.

The ideals of religion must cover the whole field of life, they must enter into all our thoughts, and more and more into practice. We will enter gradually on the practical side as we proceed. But this series of lectures is intended to be a basis, and so we must first apply ourselves to theories and understand how they are worked out, proceeding from forest caves to busy streets and cities; and one peculiar feature we find is that many of these thoughts have been the outcome, not of retirement into forests, but have emanated from persons whom we expect to lead the busiest lives—from ruling monarchs.

Shvetaketu was the son of Aruni, a sage, most probably a recluse. He was brought up in the forest, but he went to the city of the Panchalas and appeared at the court of the king, Pravahana Jaivali. The king asked him, "Do you know how beings depart hence at death?" "No, sir." "Do you know how they return hither?" "No, sir." "Do you know the way of the fathers and the way of the gods?" "No, sir." Then the king asked other questions.

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Shvetaketu could not answer them. So the king told him that he knew nothing. The boy went back to his father, and the father admitted that he himself could not answer these questions. It was not that he was unwilling to answer these questions.

It was not that he was unwilling to teach the boy, but he did not know these things. So he went to the king and asked to be taught these secrets. The king said that these things had been hitherto known only among kings; the priests never knew them. He, however, proceeded to teach him what he desired to know. In various Upanishads we find that this Vedanta philosophy is not the outcome of meditation in the forests only, but that the very best parts of it were thought out and expressed by brains which were busiest in the everyday affairs of life. We cannot conceive any man busier than an absolute monarch, a man who is ruling over millions of people, and yet, some of these rulers were deep thinkers.

Everything goes to show that this philosophy must be very practical; and later on, when we come to the Bhagavad-Gita—most of you, perhaps, have read it, it is the best commentary we have on the Vedanta philosophy—curiously enough the scene is laid on the battlefield, where Krishna teaches this philosophy to Arjuna; and the doctrine which stands out luminously in every page of the Gita is intense activity, but in the midst of it, eternal calmness. This is the secret of work, to attain which is the goal of the Vedanta. Inactivity, as we understand it in the sense of passivity, certainly cannot be the goal. Were it so, then the walls around us would be the most intelligent; they are inactive. Clods of earth, stumps of trees, would be the greatest sages in the world; they are inactive. Nor does inactivity become activity when it is combined with passion. Real activity, which is the goal of Vedanta, is combined with eternal calmness, the calmness which cannot be ruffled, the balance of mind which is never disturbed, whatever happens. And we all know from our experience in life that that is the best attitude for work.

I have been asked many times how we can work if we do not have the passion which we generally feel for work. I also thought in that way years ago, but as I am growing older, getting more experience, I find it is not true. The less passion there is, the better we work. The calmer we are, the better for us, and the more the amount of work we can do. When we let loose our feelings, we waste so much energy, shatter our nerves, disturb our minds, and accomplish very little work.

The energy which ought to have gone out as work is spent as mere feeling, which counts for nothing. It is only when the mind is very calm and collected that the whole of its energy is spent in doing good work. And if you read the lives of the great workers which the world has produced, you will find that they were wonderfully calm men. Nothing, as it were, could throw them off their balance. That is why the man who becomes angry never does a great amount of work, and the man whom nothing can make angry accomplishes so much. The man who gives way to anger, or hatred, or any other passion, cannot work; he only breaks himself to pieces, and does nothing practical. It is the calm, forgiving, equable, well-balanced mind that does the greatest amount of work.

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The Vedanta preaches the ideal; and the ideal, as we know, is always far ahead of the real, of the practical, as we may call it. There are two tendencies in human nature: one to harmonise the ideal with the life, and the other to elevate the life to the ideal. It is a great thing to understand this, for the former tendency is the temptation of our lives. I think that I can only do a certain class of work. Most of it, perhaps, is bad; most of it, perhaps, has a motive power of passion behind it, anger, or greed, or selfishness. Now if any man comes to preach to me a certain ideal, the first step towards which is to give up selfishness, to give up self-enjoyment, I think that is impractical.

But when a man brings an ideal which can be reconciled with my selfishness, I am glad at once and jump at it. That is the ideal for me. As the word "orthodox" has been manipulated into various forms, so has been the word "practical". "My doxy is orthodoxy; your doxy is heterodoxy." So with practicality. What I think is practical, is to me the only practicality in the world. If I am a shopkeeper, I think shopkeeping the only practical pursuit in the world. If I am a thief, I think stealing is the best means of being practical; others are not practical. You see how we all use this word practical for things we like and can do.

Therefore I will ask you to understand that Vedanta, though it is intensely practical, is always so in the sense of the ideal. It does not preach an impossible ideal, however high it be, and it is high enough for an ideal. In one word, this ideal is that you are divine, "Thou art That". This is the essence of Vedanta; after all its ramifications and intellectual gymnastics, you know the human soul to be pure and omniscient, you see that such superstitions as birth and death would be entire nonsense when spoken of in connection with the soul. The soul was never born and will never die, and all these ideas that we are going to die and are afraid to die are mere superstitions. And all such ideas as that we can do this or cannot do that are superstitions. We can do everything.

The Vedanta teaches men to have faith in themselves first. As certain religions of the world say that a man who does not believe in a Personal God outside of himself is an atheist, so the Vedanta says, a man who does not believe in himself is an atheist. Not believing in the glory of our own soul is what the Vedanta calls atheism. Tomany this is, no doubt, a terrible idea; and most of us think that this ideal can never be reached; but the Vedanta insists that it can be realised by every one. There is neither man nor woman or child, nor difference of race or sex, nor anything that stands as a bar to the realisation of the ideal, because Vedanta shows that it is realised already, it is already there.

All the powers in the universe are already ours. It is we who have put our hands before our eyes and cry that it is dark. Know that there is no darkness around us. Take the hands away and there is the light which was from the beginning. Darkness never existed, weakness never existed. We who are fools cry that we are weak; we who are fools cry that we are impure. Thus Vedanta not only insists that the ideal is practical, but that

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it has been so all the time; and this Ideal, this Reality, is our own nature. Everything else that you see is false, untrue. As soon as you say, "I am a little mortal being," you are saying something which is not true, you are giving the lie to yourselves, you are hypnotising yourselves into something vile and weak and wretched.

The Vedanta recognises no sin, it only recognises error. And the greatest error, says the Vedanta, is to say that you are weak, that you are a sinner, a miserable creature, and that you have no power and you cannot do this and that. Every time you think in that way, you, as it were, rivet one more link in the chain that binds you down, you add one more layer of hypnotism on to your own soul. Therefore, whosoever thinks he is weak is wrong, whosoever thinks he is impure is wrong, and is throwing a bad thought into the world. This we must always bear in mind that in the Vedanta there is no attempt at reconciling the present life—the hypnotised life, this false life which we have assumed—with the ideal; but this false life must go, and the real life which is always existing must manifest itself, must shine out. No man becomes purer and purer, it is a matter of greater manifestation. The veil drops away, and the native purity of the soul begins to manifest itself. Everything is ours already—infinite purity, freedom, love, and power.

The Vedanta also says that not only can this be realised in the depths of forests or caves, but by men in all possible conditions of life. We have seen that the people who discovered these truths were neither living in caves nor forests, nor following the ordinary vocations of life, but men who, we have every reason to belive, led the busiest of lives, men who had to command armies, to sit on thrones, and look to the welfare of millions—and all these, in the days of absolute monarchy, and not as in these days when a king is to a great extent a mere figurehead. Yet they could find time to think out all these thoughts, to realise them, and to teach them to humanity.

How much more then should it be practical for us whose lives, compared with theirs, are lives of leisure? That we cannot realise them is a shame to us, seeing that we are comparatively free all the time, having very little to do. My requirements are as nothing compared with those of an ancient absolute monarch. My wants are as nothing compared with the demands of Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, commanding a huge army; and yet he could find time in the midst of the din and turmoil of battle to talk the highest philosophy and to carry it into his life also. Surely we ought to be able to do as much in this life of ours—comparatively free, easy, and comfortable.

Most of us here have more time than we think we have, if we really want to use it for good. With the amount of freedom we have we can attain to two hundred ideals in this life, if we will, but we must not degrade the ideal to the actual. One of the most insinuating things comes to us in the shape of persons who apologise for our mistakes and teach us how to make special excuses for all our foolish wants and foolish desires; and we think that their ideal is the only ideal we need have. But it is not so. The Vedanta teaches no such things. The actual should be reconciled to the ideal, the present life should be made to coincide with life eternal.

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For you must always remember that the one central ideal of Vedanta is this oneness. There are no two in anything, no two lives, nor even two different kinds of life for the two worlds. You will find the Vedas speaking of heavens and things like that at first; but later on, when they come to the highest ideals of their philosophy, they brush away all these things. There is but one life, one world, one existence. Everything is that—One, the difference is in degree and not in kind. The Vedanta entirely denies such ideas as that animals are separate from men, and that they were made and created by God to be used for our food.

Some people have been kind enough to start an anti-vivisection society. I asked a member, "Why do you think, my friend, that it is quite lawful to kill animals for food, and not to kill one or two for scientific experiments?" He replied, "Vivisection is most horrible, but animals have been given to us for food." Oneness includes all animals. If man's life is immortal, so also is the animal's. The difference is only in degree and not in kind.

The amoeba and I are the same, the difference is only in degree; and from the standpoint of the highest life, all these differences vanish. A man may see a great deal of difference between grass and a little tree, but if you mount very high, the grass and the biggest tree will appear much the same. So, from the standpoint of the highest ideal, the lowest animal and the highest man are the same. If you believe there is a God, the animals and the highest creatures must be the same. A God who is partial to his children called men, and cruel to his children called brute beasts, is worse than a demon. I would rather die a hundred times than worship such a God. My whole life would be a fight with such a God.

But there is no difference, and those who say there is, are irresponsible, heartless people who do not know. Here is a case of the word practical used in a wrong sense. I myself may not be a very strict vegetarian, but I understand the ideal. When I eat meat I know it is wrong. Even if I am bound to eat it under certain circumstances, I know it is cruel. I must not drag my ideal down to the actual and apologize for my weak conduct in this way. The ideal is not to eat flesh, not to injure any being, for all animals are my brothers. If you can think of them as your brothers, you have made a little headway towards the brotherhood of all souls, not to speak of the brotherhood of man! That is child's play. You generally find that this is not very acceptable to many, because it teaches them to give up the actual, and go higher up to the ideal. But if you bring out a theory which is reconciled with their present conduct, they regard it as entirely practical.

There is this strongly conservative tendency in human nature: we do not like to move one step forward. I think of mankind just as I read of persons who become frozen in snow; all such, they say, want to go to sleep, and if you try to drag them up, they say, "Let me sleep; it is so beautiful to sleep in the snow", and they die there in that sleep. So is our nature. That is what we are doing all our life, getting frozen from the feet upwards, and

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yet wanting to sleep. Therefore you must struggle towards the ideal, and if a man comes who wants to bring that ideal down to your level, and teach a religion that does not carry that highest ideal, do not listen to him. To me that is an impracticable religion.

But if a man teaches a religion which presents the highest ideal, I am ready for him. Beware when anyone is trying to apologize for sense vanities and sense weaknesses. If anyone wants to preach that way to us, poor, sense-bound clods of earth as we have made ourselves by following that teaching, we shall never progress. I have seen many of these things, I have had some experience of the world, and my country is the land where religious sects grow like mushrooms. Every year new sects arise. But one thing I have marked, that it is only those that never want to reconcile the man of flesh with the man of truth that make progress. Wherever there is this false idea of reconciling fleshly vanities with the highest ideals, of dragging down God to the level of man, there comes decay. Man should not be degraded to worldly slavery, but should be raised up to God.

At the same time, there is another side to the question. We must not look down with contempt on others. All of us are going towards the same goal. The difference between weakness and strength is one of degree; the difference between virtue and vice is one of degree; the difference between heaven and hell is one of degree; the difference between life and death is one of degree; all differences in this world are of degree, and not of kind, because oneness is the secret of everything.

All is One, which manifests itself, either as thought, or life, or soul, or body, and the difference is only in degree. As such, we have no right to look down with contempt upon those who are not developed exactly in the same degree as we are. Condemn none; if you can stretch out a helping hand, do so. If you cannot, fold your hands, bless your brother, and let them go their own way. Dragging down and condemning is not the way to work. Never is work accomplished in that way. We spend our energies in condemning others. Criticism and condemnation is a vain way of spending our energies, for in the long run we come to learn that all are seeing the same thing, are more or less approaching the same ideal, and that most of our differences are merely differences of expression.

Take the idea of sin. I was telling you just now the Vedantic idea of it, and the other idea is that man is a sinner. They are practically the same, only the one takes the positive and the other the negative side. One shows to man his strength and the other his weakness. There may be weakness, says the Vedanta, but never mind, we want to grow. Disease was found out as soon as man was born. Everyone knows his disease; it requires no one to tell us what our diseases are.

But thinking all the time that we are diseased will not cure us—medicine is necessary. We may forget anything outside, we may try to become hypocrites to the external world, but in our heart of hearts we all know our weaknesses. But, says the Vedanta, being reminded of weakness does not help much; give strength, and strength does not come by thinking of weakness all the time. The remedy for weakness is not brooding over weakness,

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but thinking of strength. Teach men of the strength that is already within them. Instead of telling them they are sinners, the Vedanta takes the opposite position, and says, "You are pure and perfect, and what you call sin does not belong to you." Sins are very low degrees of Self-manifestation; manifest your Self in a high degree. That is the one thing to remember; all of us can do that. Never say, "No", never say, "I cannot", for you are infinite. Even time and space are as nothing compared with your nature. You can do anything and everything, you are almighty.

These are the principles of ethics, but we shall now come down lower and work out the details. We shall see how this Vedanta can be carried into our everyday life, the city life, the country life, the national life, and the home life of every nation. For, if a religion cannot help man wherever he may be, wherever he stands, it is not of much use; it will remain only a theory for the chosen few. Religion, to help mankind, must be ready and able to help him in whatever condition he is, in servitude or in freedom, in the depths of degradation or on the heights of purity; everywhere, equally, it should be able to come to his aid. The principle of Vedanta, or the ideal of religion, or whatever you may call it, will be fulfilled by its capacity for performing this great function.

The ideal of faith in ourselves is of the greatest help to us. If faith in ourselves had been more extensively taught and practised, I am sure a very large portion of the evils and miseries that we have would have vanished. Throughout the history of mankind, if any motive power has been more potent than another in the lives of all great men and women, it is that of faith in themselves. Born with the consciousness that they were to be great, they became great.

Let a man go down as low as possible; there must come a time when out of sheer desperation he will take an upward curve and will learn to have faith in himself. But it is better for us that we should know it from the very first. Why should we have all these bitter experiences in order to gain faith in ourselves? We can see that all the difference between man and man is owing to the existence of non-existence of faith in himself. Faith in ourselves will do everything. I have experienced it in my own life, and am still doing so; and as I grow older that faith is becoming stronger and stronger. He is an atheist who does not believe in himself.

The old religion said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is the atheist who does not believe in himself. But it is not selfish faith, because the Vedanta, again, is the doctrine of oneness. It means faith in all, because you are all. Love for yourselves means love for all, love for animals, love for everything, for you are all one.

It is the great faith which will make the world better. I am sure of that. He is the highest man who can say with truth, "I know all about myself." Do you know how much energy, how many powers, how many forces are still lurking behind that frame of yours? What scientist has known all that is in man? Millions of years have passed since man

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first came here, and yet but one infinitesimal part of his powers has been manifested. Therefore, you must not say that you are weak. How do you know what possibilities lie behind that degradation on the surface? You know but little of that which is within you. For behind you is the ocean of infinite power and blessedness.

"This *Atman* is first to be heard of." Hear day and night that you are that Soul. Repeat it to yourselves day and night till it enters into your very veins, till it tingles in every drop of blood, till it is in your flesh and bone. Let the whole body be full of that one ideal, "I am the birthless, the deathless, the blissful, the omniscient, the omnipotent, ever-glorious Soul." Think on it day and night; think on it till it becomes part and parcel of your life. Meditate upon it, and out of that will come work. "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh," and out of the fullness of the heart the hand worketh also.

Action will come. Fill yourselves with the idea; whatever you do, think well on it. All your actions will be magnified, transformed, deified, by the very power of the thought. If matter is powerful, thought is omnipotent. Bring this thought to bear upon your life, fill yourselves with the thought of your almightiness, your majesty, and your glory. Would to God no superstitions had been put into your head! Would to God we had not been surrounded from our birth by all these superstitious influences and paralysing ideas of our weakness and vileness! Would to God that mankind had had an easier path through which to attain to the noblest and highest truths! But man had to pass through all this; do not make the path more diffcult for those who are coming after you.

These are sometimes terrible doctrines to teach. I know people who get frightened at these ideas, but for those who want to be practical, this is the first thing to learn. Never tell yourselves or others that you are weak.

Do good if you can, but do not injure the world. You know in your inmost heart that many of your limited ideas, this humbling of yourself and praying and weeping to imaginary beings are superstitions. Tell me one case where these prayers have been answered. All the answers that came were from your own hearts. You know there are no ghosts, but no sooner are you in the dark than you feel a little creepy sensation. That is so because in our childhood we have had all these fearful ideas put into our heads. But do not teach these things to others through fear of society and public opinion, through fear of incurring the hatred of friends, or for fear of losing cherished superstitions. Be masters of all these.

What is there to be taught more in religion than the oneness of the universe and faith in one's self? All the works of mankind for thousands of years past have been towards this one goal, and mankind is yet working it out. It is your turn now and you already know the truth. For it has been taught on all sides. Not only philosophy and psychology, but materialistic sciences have declared it. Where is the scientific man today who fears to acknowledge the truth of this oneness of the universe? Who is there who dares talk of many worlds? All these are superstitions. There is only one life and one world, and

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this one life and one world is appearing to us as manifold. This manifoldness is like a dream. When you dream one dream passes away and another comes. You do not live in your dreams. The dreams come one after another, scene after scene unfolds before you. So it is in this world of ninety per cent misery and ten per cent happiness.

Perhaps after a while it will appear as ninety per cent happiness, and we shall call it heaven, but a time comes to the sage when the whole thing vanishes, and this world appears as God Himself, and his own soul as God. It is not therefore that there are many worlds, it is not that there are many lives. All this manifoldness is the manifestation of that One. That One is manifesting Himself as many, as matter, spirit, mind, thought, and everything else. It is that One, manifesting Himself as many. Therefore the first step for us to take is to teach the truth to ourselves and to others.

Let the world resound with this ideal, and let superstitions vanish. Tell it to men who are weak and persist in telling it. You are the Pure One; awake and arise, O mighty one, this sleep does not become you. Awake and arise, it does not befit you. Think not that you are weak and miserable. Almighty, arise and awake, and manifest your own nature. It is not fitting that you think yourself a sinner. It is not fitting that you think yourself weak. Say that to the world, say it to yourselves, and see what a practical result comes, see how with an electric flash everything is manifested, how everything is changed. Tell that to mankind, and show them their power. Then we shall learn how to apply it in our daily lives.

To be able to use what we call *Viveka* (discrimination), to learn how in every moment of our lives, in every one of our actions, to discriminate between what is right and wrong, true and false, we shall have to know the test of truth, which is purity, oneness. Everything that makes for oneness is truth. Love is truth, and hatred is false, because hatred makes for multiplicity. It is hatred that separates man from man; therefore it is wrong and false. It is a disintegrating power; it separates and destroys.

Love binds, love makes for that oneness. You become one, the mother with the child, families with the city, the whole world becomes one with the animals. For love is Existence, God Himself; and all this is the manifestation of that One Love, more or less expressed. The difference is only in degree, but it is the manifestation of that One Love throughout. Therefore in all our actions we have to judge whether it is making for diversity or for oneness. If for diversity we have to give it up, but if it makes for oneness we are sure it is good. So with our thoughts; we have to decide whether they make for disintegration, multiplicity, or for oneness, binding soul to soul and bringing one influence to bear. If they do this, we will take them up, and if not, we will throw them off as criminal.

The whole idea of ethics is that it does not depend on anything unknowable, it does not teach anything unknown, but in the language of the Upanishad, "The God whom you worship as an unknown God, the same I preach unto thee." It is through the Self that you know anything. I see the chair; but to see the chair, I have first to perceive myself

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and then the chair. It is in and through the Self that the chair is perceived. It is in and through the Self that you are known to me, that the whole world is known to me; and therefore to say this Self is unknown is sheer nonsense. Take off the Self and the whole universe vanishes.

In and through the Self all knowledge comes. Therefore it is the best known of all. It is yourself, that which you call I. You may wonder how this I of me can be the I of you. You may wonder how this limited I can be the unlimited Infinite, but it is so. The limited is a mere fiction. The Infinite has been covered up, as it were, and a little of It is manifesting as the I. Limitation can never come upon the unlimited; it is a fiction. The Self is known, therefore, to every one of us—man, woman, or child—and even to animals. Without knowing Him we can neither live nor move, nor have our being; without knowing this Lord of all, we cannot breathe or live a second. The God of the Vedanta is the most known of all and is not the outcome of imagination.

If this is not preaching a practical God, how else could you teach a practical God? Where is there a more practical God than He whom I see before me—a God omnipresent, in every being, more real than our senses? For you are He, the Omnipresent God Almighty, the Soul of your souls, and if I say you are not, I tell an untruth. I know it, whether at all times I realise it or not. He is the Oneness, the Unity of all, the Reality of all life and all existence.

These ideas of the ethics of Vedanta have to be worked out in detail, and, therefore, you must have patience. As I have told you, we want to take the subject in detail and work it up thoroughly, to see how the ideas grow from very low ideals, and how the one great ideal of oneness has developed and become shaped into the universal love; and we ought to study these in order to avoid dangers. The world cannot find time to work it up from the lowest steps. But what is the use of our standing on higher steps if we cannot give the truth to others coming afterwards?

Therefore, it is better to study it in all its workings; and first, it is absolutely necessary to clear the intellectual portion, although we know that intellectuality is almost nothing; for it is the heart that is of most importance. It is through the heart that the Lord is seen, and not through the intellect. The intellect is only the street-cleaner, cleansing the path for us, a secondary worker, the policeman; but the policeman is not a positive necessity for the workings of society. He is only to stop disturbances, to check wrong-doing, and that is all the work required of the intellect. When you read intellectual books, you think when you have mastered them, "Bless the Lord that I am out of them", because the intellect is blind and cannot move of itself, it has neither hands nor feet.

It is feeling that works, that moves with speed infinitely superior to that of electricity or anything else. Do you feel?—that is the question. If you do, you will see the Lord. It is the feeling that you have today that will be intensified, deified, raised to the highest platform, until it feels everything, the oneness in everything, till it feels God in itself and

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in others. The intellect can never do that. "Different methods of speaking words, different methods of explaining the texts of books, these are for the enjoyment of the learned, not for the salvation of the soul" (*Vivekachudamani*, 58).

Those of you who have read Thomas a Kempis know how in every page he insists on this, and almost every holy man in the world has insisted on it. Intellect is necessary, for without it we fall into crude errors and make all sorts of mistakes. Intellect checks these; but beyond that, do not try to build anything upon it. It is an inactive, secondary help; the real help is feeling, love. Do you feel for others? If you do, you are growing in oneness. If you do not feel for others, you may be the most intellectual giant ever born, but you will be nothing; you are but dry intellect, and you will remain so. And if you feel, even if you cannot read any book and do not know any language, you are in the right way. The Lord is yours.

Do you not know from the history of the world where the power of the prophets lay? Where was it? In the intellect? Did any of them write a fine book on philosophy, on the most intricate rationals of logic? Not one of them. They only spoke a few words. Feel like Christ and you will be a Christ; feel like Buddha and you will be a Buddha. It is feeling that is the life, the strength, the vitality, without which no amount of intellectual activity can reach God. Intellect is like limbs without the power of locomotion. It is only when feeling enters and gives them motion that they move and work on others. That is so all over the world, and it is a thing which you must always remember. It is one of the most practical things in Vedantic morality, for it is the teaching of the Vedanta that you are all Prophets, and all must be Prophets. The book is not the proof of your conduct, but you are the proof of the book. How do you know that a book teaches truth? Because you are truth and feel it. That is what the Vedanta says. What is the proof of the Christs and Buddhas of the world? That you and I feel like them.

That is how you and I understand that they were true. Our prophet-soul is the proof of their prophet-soul. Your godhead is the proof of God Himself. If you are not a prophet, there never has been anything true of God. If you are not God, there never was any God, and never will be. This, says the Vedanta, is the ideal to follow. Every one of us will have to become a prophet, and you are that already. Only know it. Never think there is anything impossible for the soul. It is the greatest heresy to think so. If there is sin, this is the only sin—to say that you are weak, or others are weak.

Practical Vedanta 2

I will tell to you a very ancient story from the Chhandogya Upanishad, which tells how knowledge came to a boy. The form of the story is very crude, but we shall find that it contains a principle. A young boy said to his mother, "I am going to study the Vedas. Tell me the name of my father and my caste." The mother was not a married woman, and in India the child of a woman who has not been married is considered an outcast; he is not recognised by society and is not entitled to study the Vedas. So the poor mother

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said, "My child, I do not know your family name; I was in service, and served in different places; I do not know who your father is, but my name is Jabala and your name is Satyakama." The little child went to a sage and asked to be taken as a student. The sage asked him, "What is the name of your father, and what is your caste?" The boy repeated to him what he had heard from his mother. The sage at once said, "None but a Brahmin could speak such a damaging truth about himself. You are a Brahmin and I will teach you. You have not swerved from the truth." So he kept the boy with him and educated him.

This teacher gave Satyakama four hundred lean, weak cows to take care of, and sent him to the forest. There he went and lived for some time. The teacher had told him to come back when the herd would increase to the number of one thousand. After a few years, one day Satyakama heard a big bull in the herd saying to him, "We are a thousand now; take us back to your teacher. I will teach you a little of Brahman." "Say on, sir," said Satyakama. Then the bull said, "The East is a part of the Lord, so is the West, so is the South, so is the North.

The four cardinal points are the four parts of Brahman. Fire will also teach you something of Brahman." Fire was a great symbol in those days, and every student had to procure fire and make offerings. So on the following day, Satyakama started for his Guru's house, and when in the evening he had performed his oblation, and worshipped at the fire, and was sitting near it, he heard a voice come from the fire, "O Satyakama." "Speak, Lord," said Satyakama. (Perhaps you may remember a very similar story in the Old Testament, how Samuel heard a mysterious voice.) "O Satyakama, I am come to teach you a little of Brahman.

This earth is a portion of that Brahman. The sky and heaven are portions of it. The ocean is a part of that Brahman." Then the fire said that a certain bird would also teach him something. Satyakama continued his journey and on the next day when he had performed his evening sacrifice a swan came to him and said, "I will teach you something about Brahman. This fire which you worship, O Satyakama, is a part of that Brahman. The sun is a part, the moon is a part, the lightning is a part of that Brahman. A bird called Madgu will tell you more about it." The next evening that bird came, and a similar voice was heard by Satyakama, "I will tell you something about Brahman. Breath is a part of Brahman, sight is a part, hearing is a part, the mind is a part."

Then the boy arrived at his teacher's place and presented himself before him with due reverence. No sooner had the teacher seen this disciple than he remarked: "Satyakama, thy face shines like that of a knower of Brahman! Who then has taught thee?" "Beings other than men," replied Satyakama. "But I wish that you should teach me, sir. For I have heard from men like you that knowledge which is learnt from a Guru alone leads to the supreme good." Then the sage taught him the same knowledge which he had received from the gods. "And nothing was left out, yea, nothing was left out."

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Now, apart from the allegories of what the bull, the fire, and the birds taught, we see the tendency of the thought and the direction in which it was going in those days. The great idea of which we here see the germ is that all these voices are inside ourselves. As we understand these truths better, we find that the voice is in our own heart, and the student understood that all the time he was hearing the truth; but his explanation was not correct.

He was interpreting the voice as coming from the external world, while all the time, it was within him. The second idea that we get is that of making the knowledge of the Brahman practical. The world is always seeking the practical possibilities of religion, and we find in these stories how it was becoming more and more practical every day. The truth was shown through everything with which the students were familiar. The fire they were worshipping was Brahman, the earth was a part of Brahman, and so on.

The next story belongs to Upakoshala Kamalayana, a disciple of this Satyakama, who went to be taught by him and dwelt with him for some time. Now Satyakama went away on a journey, and the student became very down-hearted; and when the teacher's wife came and asked him why he was not eating, the boy said, "I am too unhappy to eat." Then a voice came from the fire he was worshipping, saying "This life is Brahman, Brahman is the ether, and Brahman is happiness. Know Brahman." "I know, sir," the boy replied, "that life is Brahman, but that It is ether and happiness I do not know."

Then it explained that the two words ether and happiness signified one thing in reality, *viz* the sentient (pure intelligence) that resides in the heart. So, it taught him Brahman as life and as the ether in the heart. Then the fire taught him, "This earth, food, fire, and sun whom you worship, are forms of Brahman. The person that is seen in the sun, I am He. He who knows this and meditates on Him, all his sins vanish and he has long life and becomes happy. He who lives in the cardinal points, the moon, the stars, and the water, I am He. He who lives in this life, the ether, the heavens, and the lightning, I am He." Here too we see the same idea of practical religion.

The things which they were worshipping, such as the fire, the sun, the moon, and so forth, and the voice with which they were familiar, form the subject of the stories which explain them and give them a higher meaning. And this is the real, practical side of Vedanta. It does not destroy the world, but it explains it; it does not destroy the person, but explains him; it does not destroy the individuality, but explains it by showing the real individuality. It does not show that this world is vain and does not exist, but it says, "Understand what this world is, so that it may not hurt you."

The voice did not say to Upakoshala that the fire which he was worshipping, or the sun, or the moon, or the lightning, or anything else, was all wrong, but it showed him that the same spirit which was inside the sun, and the moon, and lightning, and the fire, and the earth, was in him, so that everything became transformed, as it were, in the eyes of Upakoshala. The fire which was merely a material fire before, in which to make

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oblations, assumed a new aspect and became the Lord. The earth became transformed, life became transformed, the sun, the moon, the stars, the lightning, everything became transformed and deified. Their real nature was known.

The theme of the Vedanta is to see the Lord in everything, to see things in their real nature, not as they appear to be. Then another lesson is taught in the Upanishads: "He who shines through the eyes is Brahman; He is the Beautiful One, He is the Shining One. He shines in all these worlds." A certain peculiar light, a commentator says, which comes to the pure man, is what is meant by the light in the eyes, and it is said that when a man is pure such a light will shine in his eyes, and that light belongs really to the Soul within, which is everywhere. It is the same light which shines in the planets, in the stars, and suns.

I will now read to you some other doctrine of these ancient Upanishads, about birth and death and so on. Perhaps it will interest you. Shvetaketu went to the king of the Panchalas, and the king asked him, "Do you know where people go when they die? Do you know how they come back? Do you know why the other world does not become full?" The boy replied that he did not know. Then he went to his father and asked him the same questions. The father said, "I do not know," and he went to the king. The king said that this knowledge was never known to the priests, it was only with the kings, and that was the reason why kings ruled the world. This man stayed with the king for some time, for the king said he would teach him. "The other world, O Gautama, is the fire. The sun is its fuel. The rays are the smoke. The day is the flame.

The moon is the embers. And the stars are the sparks. In this fire the gods pour libation of faith and from this libation king Soma is born." So on he goes. "You need not make oblation to that little fire: the whole world is that fire, and this oblation, this worship, is continually going on. The gods, and the angels, and everybody is worshipping it. Man is the greatest symbol of fire, the body of man." Here also we see the ideal becoming practical and Brahman is seen in everything. The principle that underlies all these stories is that invented symbolism may be good and helpful, but already better symbols exist than any we can invent. You may invent an image through which to worship God, but a better image already exists, the living man. You may build a temple in which to worship God, and that may be good, but a better one, a much higher one, already exists, the human body.

You remember that the Vedas have two parts, the ceremonial and the knowledge portions. In time ceremonials had multiplied and become so intricate that it was almost hopeless to disentangle them, and so in the Upanishads we find that the ceremonials are almost done away with, but gently, by explaining them. We see that in old times they had these oblations and sacrifices, then the philosophers came, and instead of snatching away the symbols from the hands of the ignorant, instead of taking the negative position, which we unfortunately find so general in modern reforms, they gave them something

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to take their place. "Here is the symbol of fire," they said. "Very good! But here is another symbol, the earth. What a grand, great symbol! Here is this little temple, but the whole universe is a temple; a man can worship anywhere. There are the peculiar figures that men draw on the earth, and there are the altars, but here is the greatest of altars, the living, conscious human body, and to worship at this altar is far higher than the worship of any dead symbols."

We now come to a peculiar doctrine. I do not understand much of it myself. If you can make something out of it, I will read it to you. When a man dies, who has by meditation purified himself and got knowledge, he first goes to light, then from light to day, from day to the light-half of the moon, from that to the six months when the sun goes to the north, from that to the year, from the year to the sun, from the sun to the moon, from the moon to the lightning, and when he comes to the sphere of lightning, he meets a person who is not human, and that person leads him to (the conditioned) Brahman. This is the way of the gods. When sages and wise persons die, they go that way and they do not return.

What is meant by this month and year, and all these things, no one understands clearly. Each one gives his own meaning, and some say it is all nonsense. What is meant by going to the world of the moon and of the sun, and this person who comes to help the soul after it has reached the sphere of lightning, no one knows. There is an idea among the Hindus that the moon is a place where life exists, and we shall see how life has come from there. Those that have not attained to knowledge, but have done good work in this life, first go, when they die, through smoke, then to night, then to the dark fifteen days, then to the six months when the sun goes to the south, and from that they go to the region of their forefathers, then to ether, then to the region of the moon, and there become the food of the gods, and later, are born as gods and live there so long as their good works will permit.

And when the effect of the good work has been finished, they come back to earth by the same route. They first become ether, and then air, and then smoke, and then mist, then cloud, and then fall upon the earth as raindrops; then they get into food, which is eaten up by human beings, and finally become their children. Those whose works have been very good take birth in good families, and those whose works have been bad take bad births, even in animal bodies. Animals are continually coming to and going from this earth. That is why the earth is neither full nor empty.

Several ideas we can get also from this, and later on, perhaps, we shall be able to understand it better, and we can speculate a little upon what it means. The last part which deals with how those who have been in heaven return, is clearer, perhaps, than the first part; but the whole idea seems to be this that there is no permanent heaven without realising God. Now some people who have not realised God, but have done good work in this world, with the view of enjoying the results, go, when they die, through this and that place, until they reach heaven, and there they are born in the same way as we are here,

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as children of the gods, and they live there as long as their good works will permit. Out of this comes one basic idea of the Vedanta that everything which has name and form is transient. This earth is transient, because it has name and form, and so the heavens must be transient, because there also name and form remain. A heaven which is eternal will be contradictory in terms, because everything that has name and form must begin in time, exist in time, and end in time. These are settled doctrines of the Vedanta, and as such the heavens are given up.

We have seen in the Samhita that the idea of heaven was that it was eternal, much the same as is prevalent among Mohammedans and Christians. The Mohammedans concretise it a little more. They say it is a place where there are gardens, beneath which rivers run. In the desert of Arabia water is very desirable, so the Mohammedan always conceives of his heaven as containing much water. I was born in a country where there are six months of rain every year. I should think of heaven, I suppose, as a dry place, and so also would the English people.

These heavens in the Samhita are eternal, and the departed have beautiful bodies and live with their forefathers, and are happy ever afterwards. There they meet with their parents, children, and other relatives, and lead very much the same sort of life as here, only much happier. All the difficulties and obstructions to happiness in this life have vanished, and only its good parts and enjoyments remain. But however comfortable mankind may consider this state of things, truth is one thing and comfort is another. There are cases where truth is not comfortable until we reach its climax. Human nature is very conservative. It does something, and having once done that, finds it hard to get out of it. The mind will not receive new thoughts, because they bring discomfort.

In the Upanishads, we see a tremendous departure made. It is declared that these heavens in which men live with the ancestors after death cannot be permanent, seeing that everything which has name and form must die.

If there are heavens with forms, these heavens must vanish in course of time; they may last millions of years, but there must come a time when they will have to go. With this idea came another that these souls must come back to earth, and that heavens are places where they enjoy the results of their good works, and after these effects are finished they come back into this earth life again. One thing is clear from this that mankind had a perception of the philosophy of causation even at the early time. Later on we shall see how our philosophers bring that out in the language of philosophy and logic, but here it is almost in the language of children. One thing you may remark in reading these books that it is all internal perception.

If you ask me if this can be practical, my answer is, it has been practical first, and philosophical next. You can see that first these things have been perceived and realised and then written. This world spoke to the early thinkers. Birds spoke to them, animals spoke to them, the sun and the moon spoke to them; and little by little they realised things,

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and got into the heart of nature. Not by cognition, not by the force of logic, not by picking the brains of others and making a big book, as is the fashion in modern times, not even as I do, by taking up one of their writings and making a long lecture, but by patient investigation and discovery they found out the truth.

Its essential method was practice, and so it must be always. Religion is ever a practical science, and there never was nor will be any theological religion. It is practice first, and knowledge afterwards. The idea that souls come back is already there. Those persons who do good work with the idea of a result, get it, but the result is not permanent. There we get the idea of causation very beautifully put forward, that the effect is only commensurate with the cause. As the cause is, so the effect will be. The cause being finite, the effect must be finite. If the cause is eternal the effect can be eternal, but all these causes, doing good work, and all other things, are only finite causes, and as such cannot produce infinite result.

We now come to the other side of the question. As there cannot be an eternal heaven, on the same grounds, there cannot be an eternal hell. Suppose I am a very wicked man, doing evil every minute of my life. Still, my whole life here, compared with my eternal life, is nothing. If there be an eternal punishment, it will mean that there is an infinite effect produced by a finite cause, which cannot be. If I do good all my life, I cannot have an infinite heaven; it would be making the same mistake. But there is a third course which applies to those who have known the Truth, to those who have realised it. This is the only way to get beyond this veil of Maya—to realise what Truth is; and the Upanishads indicate what is meant by realising the Truth.

It means recognising neither good nor bad, but knowing all as coming from the Self; Self is in everything. It means denying the universe; shutting your eyes to it; seeing the Lord in hell as well as in heaven; seeing the Lord in death as well as in life. This is the line of thought in the passage I have read to you; the earth is a symbol of the Lord, the sky is the Lord, the place we fill is the Lord, everything is Brahman. And this is to be seen, realised, not simply talked or thought about. We can see as its logical consequence that when the soul has realised that everything is full of the Lord, of Brahman, it will not care whether it goes to heaven, or hell, or anywhere else; whether it be born again on this earth or in heaven. These things have ceased to have any meaning to that soul, because every place is the same, every place is the temple of the Lord, every place has become holy and the presence of the Lord is all that it sees in heaven, or hell, or anywhere else. Neither good nor bad, neither life nor death—only the one infinite Brahman exists.

According to the Vedanta, when a man has arrived at that perception, he has become free, and he is the only man who is fit to live in this world. Others are not. The man who sees evil, how can he live in this world? His life is a mass of misery. The man who sees dangers, his life is a misery; the man who sees death, his life is a misery. That man alone can live in this world, he alone can say, "I enjoy this life, and I am happy in this life," who has seen the Truth, and the Truth in everything. By the by, I may tell you that the

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idea of hell does not occur in the Vedas anywhere. It comes with the Puranas much later. The worst punishment according to the Vedas is coming back to earth, having another chance in this world. From the very first we see the idea is taking the impersonal turn. The ideas of punishment and reward are very material, and they are only consonant with the idea of a human God, who loves one and hates another, just as we do. Punishment and reward are only admissible with the existence of such a God.

They had such a God in the Samhita, and there we find the idea of fear entering, but as soon as we come to the Upanishads, the idea of fear vanishes, and the impersonal idea takes its place. It is naturally the hardest thing for man to understand, this impersonal idea, for he is always clinging on to the person. Even people who are thought to be great thinkers get disgusted at the idea of the Impersonal God. But to me it seems so absurd to think of God as an embodied man. Which is the higher idea, a living God, or a dead God? A God whom nobody sees, nobody knows, or a God Known?

The Impersonal God is a living God, a principle. The difference between personal and impersonal is this, that the personal is only a man, and the impersonal idea is that He is the angel, the man, the animal, and yet something more which we cannot see, because impersonality includes all personalities, is the sum total of everything in the universe, and infinitely more besides. "As the one fire coming into the world is manifesting itself in so many forms, and yet is infinitely more besides," so is the Impersonal.

We want to worship a living God. I have seen nothing but God all my life, nor have you. To see this chair you first see God, and then the chair in and through Him. He is everywhere saying, "I am". The moment you feel "I am", you are conscious of Existence. Where shall we go to find God if we cannot see Him in our own hearts and in every living being? "Thou art the man, Thou art the woman, Thou art the girl, and Thou art the boy. Thou art the old man tottering with a stick.

Thou art the young man walking in the pride of his strength." Thou art all that exists, a wonderful living God who is the only fact in the universe. This seems to many to be a terrible contradiction to the traditional God who lives behind a veil somewhere and whom nobody ever sees. The priests only give us an assurance that if we follow them, listen to their admonitions, and walk in the way they mark out for us—then when we die, they will give us a passport to enable us to see the face of God! What are all these heaven ideas but simply modifications of this nonsensical priestcraft?

Of course the impersonal idea is very destructive; it takes away all trade from the priests, churches, and temples. In India there is a famine now, but there are temples in each one of which there are jewels worth a king's ransom! If the priests taught this Impersonal idea to the people, their occupation would be gone. Yet we have to teach it unselfishly, without priestcraft. You are God and so am I; who obeys whom? Who worships whom? You are the highest temple of God; I would rather worship you than any temple, image, or Bible. Why are some people so contradictory in their thought? They are like

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fish slipping through our fingers. They say they are hard-headed practical men. Very good. But what is more practical than worshipping here, worshipping you? I see you, feel you, and I know you are God. The Mohammedan says, there is no God but Allah. The Vedanta says, there is nothing that is not God. It may frighten many of you, but you will understand it by degrees.

The living God is within you, and yet you are building churches and temples and believing all sorts of imaginary nonsense. The only God to worship is the human soul in the human body. Of course all animals are temples too, but man is the highest, the Taj Mahal of temples. If I cannot worship in that, no other temple will be of any advantage. The moment I have realised God sitting in the temple of every human body, the moment I stand in reverence before every human being and see God in him—that moment I am free from bondage, everything that binds vanishes, and I am free.

This is the most practical of all worship. It has nothing to do with theorising and speculation. Yet it frightens many. They say it is not right. They go on theorising about old ideals told them by their grandfathers, that a God somewhere in heaven had told some one that he was God. Since that time we have only theories. This is practicality according to them, and our ideas are impractical! No doubt, the Vedanta says that each one must have his own path, but the path is not the goal.

The worship of a God in heaven and all these things are not bad, but they are only steps towards the Truth and not the Truth itself. They are good and beautiful, and some wonderful ideas are there, but the Vedanta says at every point, "My friend, Him whom you are worshipping as unknown, I worship as thee. He whom you are worshipping as unknown and are seeking for, throughout the universe, has been with you all the time. You are living through Him, and He is the Eternal Witness of the universe." "He whom all the Vedas worship, nay, more, He who is always present in the eternal 'I', He is existing, the whole universe exists. He is the light and life of the universe.

If the 'I' were not in you, you would not see the sun, everything would be a dark mass. He shining, you see the world."

One question is generally asked, and it is this that this may lead to a tremendous amount of difficulty. Everyone of us will think, "I am God, and whatever I do or think must be good, for God can do no evil." In the first place, even taking this danger of misinterpretation for granted, can it be proved that on the other side the same danger does not exist? They have been worshipping a God in heaven separate from them, and of whom they are much afraid. They have been born shaking with fear, and all their life they will go on shaking. Has the world been made much better by this?

Those who have understood and worshipped a Personal God, and those who have understood and worshipped an Impersonal God, on which side have been the great workers of the world—gigantic workers, gigantic moral powers? Certainly on the Impersonal. How can you expect morality to be developed through fear? It can never be. "Where one sees

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another, where one hears another, that is Maya. When one does not see another, when one does not hear another, when everything has become the *Atman*, who sees whom, who perceives whom?" It is all He, and all I, at the same time. The soul has become pure. Then, and then alone we understand what love is. Love cannot come through fear, its basis is freedom. When we really begin to love the world, then we understand what is meant by brotherhood or mankind, and not before.

So, it is not right to say that the Impersonal idea will lead to a tremendous amount of evil in the world, as if the other doctrine never lent itself to works of evil, as if it did not lead to sectarianism deluging the world with blood and causing men to tear each other to pieces. "My God is the greatest god, let us decide it by a free fight." That is the outcome of dualism all over the world. Come out into the broad open light of day, come out from the little narrow paths, for how can the infinite soul rest content to live and die in small ruts? Come out into the universe of Light. Everything in the universe is yours, stretch out your arms and embrace it with love. If you ever felt you wanted to do that, you have felt God.

You remember that passage in the sermon of Buddha, how he sent a thought of love towards the south, the north, the east, and the west, above and below, until the whole universe was filled with this love, so grand, great, and infinite. When you have that feeling, you have true personality. The whole universe is one person; let go the little things. Give up the small for the Infinite, give up small enjoyments for infinite bliss.

It is all yours, for the Impersonal includes the Personal. So God is Personal and Impersonal at the same time. And Man, the Infinite, Impersonal Man, is manifesting Himself as person. We the infinite have limited ourselves, as it were, into small parts. The Vedanta says that Infinity is our true nature; it will never vanish, it will abide for ever. But we are limiting ourselves by our Karma, which like a chain round our necks has dragged us into this limitation. Break that chain and be free. Trample law under your feet. There is no law in human nature, there is no destiny, no fate.

How can there be law in infinity? Freedom is its watchword. Freedom is its nature, its birth-right. Be free, and then have any number of personalities you like. Then we will play like the actor who comes upon the stage and plays the part of a beggar. Contrast him with the actual beggar walking in the streets. The scene is, perhaps, the same in both cases, the words are, perhaps, the same, but yet what difference! The one enjoys his beggary while the other is suffering misery from it. And what makes this difference? the one is free and the other is bound.

The actor knows his beggary is not true, but that he has assumed it for play, while the real beggar thinks that it is his too familiar state and that he has to bear it whether he wills it or not. This is the law. So long as we have no knowledge of our real nature, we are beggars, jostled about by every force in nature; and made slaves of by everything in nature; we cry all over the world for help, but help never comes to us; we cry to

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imaginary beings, and yet it never comes. But still we hope help will come, and thus in weeping, wailing, and hoping, one life is passed, and the same play goes on and on.

Be free; hope for nothing from anyone. I am sure if you look back upon your lives you will find that you were always vainly trying to get help from others which never came. All the help that has come was from within yourselves. You only had the fruits of what you yourselves worked for, and yet you were strangely hoping all the time for help. A rich man's parlour is always full; but if you notice, you do not find the same people there. The visitors are always hoping that they will get something from those wealthy men, but they never do.

So are our lives spent in hoping, hoping, hoping, which never comes to an end. Give up hope, says the Vedanta. Why should you hope? You have everything, nay, you are everything. What are you hoping for? If a king goes mad, and runs about trying to find the king of his country, he will never find him, because he is the king himself. He may go through every village and city in his own country, seeking in every house, weeping and wailing, but he will never find him, because he is the king himself. It is better that we know we are God and give up this fool's search after Him; and knowing that we are God we become happy and contented. Give up all these mad pursuits, and then play your part in the universe, as an actor on the stage.

The whole vision is changed, and instead of an eternal prison this world has become a playground; instead of a land of competition it is a land of bliss, where there is perpetual spring, flowers bloom and butterflies flit about.

This very world becomes heaven, which formerly was hell. To the eyes of the bound it is a tremendous place of torment, but to the eyes of the free it is quite otherwise. This one life is the universal life, heavens and all those places are here. All the gods are here, the prototypes of man. The gods did not create man after their type, but man created gods. And here are the prototypes, here is Indra, here is Varuna, and all the gods of the universe. We have been projecting our little doubles, and we are the originals of these gods, we are the real, the only gods to be worshipped.

This is the view of the Vedanta, and this its practicality. When we have become free, we need not go mad and throw up society and rush off to die in the forest or the cave; we shall remain where we were, only we shall understand the whole thing. The same phenomena will remain, but with a new meaning. We do not know the world yet; it is only through freedom that we see what it is, and understand its nature. We shall see then that this so-called law, or fate, or destiny occupies only an infinitesimal part of our nature.

It was only one side, but on the other side there was freedom all the time. We did not know this, and that is why we have been trying to save ourselves from evil by hiding our faces in the ground, like the hunted hare. Through delusion we have been trying to forget our nature, and yet we could not; it was always calling upon us, and all our search after God or gods, or external freedom, was a search after our real nature. We mistook

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the voice. We thought it was from the fire, or from a god or the sun, or moon, or stars, but at last we have found that it was from within ourselves. Within ourselves is this eternal voice speaking of eternal freedom; its music is eternally going on. Part of this music of the Soul has become the earth, the law, this universe, but it was always ours and always will be. In one word, the ideal of Vedanta is to know man as he really is, and this is its message, that if you cannot worship your brother man, the manifested God, how can you worship a God who is unmanifested?

Do you not remember what the Bible says, "If you cannot love your brother whom you have seen, how can you love God whom you have not seen?" If you cannot see God in the human face, how can you see him in the clouds, or in images made of dull, dead matter, or in mere fictitious stories of our brain? I shall call you religious from the day you begin to see God in men and women, and then you will understand what is meant by turning the left cheek to the man who strikes you on the right. When you see man as God, everything, even the tiger, will be welcome. Whatever comes to you is but the Lord, the Eternal, the Blessed One, appearing to us in various forms, as our father, and mother, and friend, and child—they are our own soul playing with us.

As our human relationships can thus be made divine, so our relationship with God may take any of these forms and we can look upon Him as our father, or mother, or friend, or beloved. Calling God Mother is a higher ideal than calling Him Father; and to call Him Friend is still higher; but the highest is to regard Him as the Beloved. The highest point of all is to see no difference between lover and beloved. You may remember, perhaps, the old Persian story, of how a lover came and knocked at the door of the beloved and was asked, "Who are you?" He answered, "It is I", and there was no response. A second time he came, and exclaimed, "I am here", but the door was not opened. The third time he came, and the voice asked from inside, "Who is there?" He replied, "I am thyself, my beloved", and the door opened. So is the relation between God and ourselves. He is in everything. He is everything. Every man and woman is the palpable, blissful, living God. Who says God is unknown? Who says He is to be searched after?

We have found God eternally. We have been living in Him eternally; everywhere He is eternally known, eternally worshipped.

Then comes another idea, that other forms of worship are not errors. This is one of the great points to be remembered, that those who worship God through ceremonials and forms, however crude we may think them to be, are not in error. It is the journey from truth to truth, from lower truth to higher truth. Darkness is less light; evil is less good; impurity is less purity. It must always be borne in mind that we should see others with eyes of love, with sympathy, knowing that they are going along the same path that we have trodden. If you are free, you must know that all will be so sooner or later, and if you are free, how can you see the impermanent? If you are really pure, how do you see the impure? For what is within, is without. We cannot see impurity without having it

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inside ourselves. This is one of the practical sides of Vedanta, and I hope that we shall all try to carry it into our lives. Our whole life here is to carry this into practice, but the one great point we gain is that we shall work with satisfaction and contentment, instead of with discontent and dissatisfaction, for we know that Truth is within us, we have it as our birth-right, and we have only to manifest it, and make it tangible.

Practical Vedanta 3

In the Chhandogya Upanishad we read that a sage called Narada came to another called Sanatkumara, and asked him various questions, of which one was, if religion was the cause of things as they are. And Sanatkumara leads him, as it were, step by step, telling him that there is something higher than this earth, and something higher than that, and so on, till he comes to *Akasha*. Ether is higher than light, because in the ether are the sun and the moon, lightning and the stars; in ether we live, and in ether we die. Then the question arises, if there is anything higher than that, and Sanatkumara tells him of Prana. This Prana, according to the Vedanta, is the principle of life. It is like ether, an omnipresent principle; and all motion, either in the body or anywhere else, is the work of this Prana. It is greater than *Akasha*, and through it everything lives. Prana is in the mother, in the father, in the sister, in the teacher, Prana is the knower.

I will read another passage, where Shvetaketu asks his father about the Truth, and the father teaches him different things, and concludes by saying, "That which is the fine cause in all these things, of it are all these things made. That is the All, that is Truth, thou art That, O Shvetaketu." And then he gives various examples. "As a bee, O Shvetaketu, gathers honey from different flowers, and as the different honeys do not know that they are from various trees, and from various flowers, so all of us, having come to that Existence, know not that we have done so. Now, that which is that subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self and thou, O Shvetaketu, are That." He gives another example of the rivers running down to the ocean. "As the rivers, when they are in the ocean, do not know that they have been various rivers, even so when we come out of that Existence, we do not know that we are That. O Shvetaketu, thou are That." So on he goes with his teachings.

Now there are two principles of knowledge. The one principle is that we know by referring the particular to the general, and the general to the universal; and the second is that anything of which the explanation is sought is to be explained so far as possible from its own nature. Taking up the first principle, we see that all our knowledge really consists of classifications, going higher and higher. When something happens singly, we are, as it were, dissatisfied. When it can be shown that the same thing happens again and again, we are satisfied and call it law. When we find that one apple falls, we are dissatisfied; but when we find that all apples fall, we call it the law of gravitation and are satisfied. The fact is that from the particular we deduce the general.

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When we want to study religion, we should apply this scientific process. The same principle also holds good here, and as a fact we find that that has been the method all through. In reading these books from which I have been translating to you, the earliest idea that I can trace is this principle of going from the particular to the general. We see how the "bright ones" became merged into one principle; and likewise in the ideas of the cosmos we find the ancient thinkers going higher and higher—from the fine elements they go to finer and more embracing elements, and from these particulars they come to one omnipresent and from that even they go to an all-embracing force, or Prana; and through all this runs the principle, that one is not separate from the others. It is the very ether that exists in the higher form of Prana, or the higher form of Prana concretes, so to say, and becomes ether; and that becomes still grosser, and so on.

The generalisation of the Personal God is another case in point. We have seen how this generalisation was reached, and was called the sum total of all consciousness. But a difficulty arises—it is an incomplete generalisation. We take up only one side of the facts of nature, the fact of consciousness, and upon that we generalise, but the other side is left out. So, in the first place it is a defective generalisation. There is another insufficiency, and that relates to the second principle. Everything should be explained from its own nature. There may have been people who thought that every apple that fell to the ground was dragged down by a ghost, but the explanation is the law of gravitation; and although we know it is not a perfect explanation, yet it is much better than the other, because it is derived from the nature of the thing itself, while the other posits an extraneous cause. So throughout the whole range of our knowledge; the explanation which is based upon the nature of the thing itself is a scientific explanation, and an explanation which brings in an outside agent is unscientific.

So the explanation of a Personal God as the creator of the universe has to stand that test. If that God is outside of nature, having nothing to do with nature, and this nature is the outcome of the command of that God and produced from nothing, it is a very unscientific theory, and this has been the weak point of every Theistic religion throughout the ages. These two defects we find in what is generally called the theory of monotheism, the theory of a Personal God, with all the qualities of a human being multiplied very much, who, by His will, created this universe out of nothing and yet is separate from it. This leads us into two difficulties.

As we have seen, it is not a sufficient generalisation, and secondly, it is not an explanation of nature from nature. It holds that the effect is not the cause, that the cause is entirely separate from the effect. Yet all human knowledge shows that the effect is but the cause in another form. To this idea the discoveries of modern science are tending every day, and the latest theory that has been accepted on all sides is the theory of evolution, the principle of which is that the effect is but the cause in another form, a readjustment of the cause, and the cause takes the form of the effect. The theory of creation out of nothing would be laughed at by modern scientists.

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Now, can religion stand these tests? If there be any religious theories which can stand these two tests, they will be acceptable to the modern mind, to the thinking mind. Any other theory which we ask the modern man to believe, on the authority of priests, or churches, or books, he is unable to accept, and the result is a hideous mass of unbelief. Even in those in whom there is an external display of belief, in their hearts there is a tremendous amount of unbelief. The rest shrink away from religion, as it were, give it up, regarding it as priestcraft only.

Religion has been reduced to a sort of national form. It is one of our very best social remnants; let it remain. But the real necessity which the grandfather of the modern man felt for it is gone; he no longer finds it satisfactory to his reason. The idea of such a Personal God, and such a creation, the idea which is generally known as monotheism in every religion, cannot hold its own any longer. In India it could not hold its own because of the Buddhists, and that was the very point where they gained their victory in ancient times. They showed that if we allow that nature is possessed of infinite power, and that nature can work out all its wants, it is simply unnecessary to insist that there is something besides nature. Even the soul is unnecessary.

The discussion about substance and qualities is very old, and you will sometimes find that the old superstition lives even at the present day. Most of you have read how, during the Middle Ages, and, I am sorry to say, even much later, this was one of the subjects of discussion, whether qualities adhered to substance, whether length, breadth, and thickness adhered to the substance which we call dead matter, whether, the substance remaining, the qualities are there or not. To this our Buddhist says, "You have no ground for maintaining the existence of such a substance; the qualities are all that exist; you do not see beyond them." This is just the position of most of our modern agnostics.

For it is this fight of the substance and qualities that, on a higher plane, takes the form of the fight between noumenon and phenomenon. There is the phenomenal world, the universe of continuous change, and there is something behind which does not change; and this duality of existence, noumenon and phenomenon, some hold, is true, and others with better reason claim that you have no right to admit the two, for what we see, feel, and think is only the phenomenon. You have no right to assert there is anything beyond phenomenon; and there is no answer to this.

The only answer we get is from the monistic theory of the Vedanta. It is true that only one exists, and that one is either phenomenon or noumenon. It is not true that there are two—something changing, and, in and through that, something which does not change; but it is the one and the same thing which appears as changing, and which is in reality unchangeable. We have come to think of the body, and mind, and soul as many, but really there is only one; and that one is appearing in all these various forms.

Take the well-known illustration of the monists, the rope appearing as the snake. Some people, in the dark or through some other cause, mistake the rope for the snake, but when

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knowledge comes, the snake vanishes and it is found to be a rope. By this illustration we see that when the snake exists in the mind, the rope has vanished, and when the rope exists, the snake has gone.

When we see phenomenon, and phenomenon only, around us, the noumenon has vanished, but when we see the noumenon, the unchangeable, it naturally follows that the phenomenon has vanished. Now, we understand better the position of both the realist and the idealist. The realist sees the phenomenon only, and the idealist looks to the noumenon. For the idealist, the really genuine idealist, who has truly arrived at the power of perception, whereby he can get away from all ideas of change, for him the changeful universe has vanished, and he has the right to say it is all delusion, there is no change. The realist at the same time looks at the changeful. For him the unchangeable has vanished, and he has a right to say this is all real.

What is the outcome of this philosophy? It is that the idea of Personal God is not sufficient. We have to get to something higher, to the Impersonal idea. It is the only logical step that we can take. Not that the personal idea would be destroyed by that, not that we supply proof that the Personal God does not exist, but we must go to the Impersonal for the explanation of the personal, for the Impersonal is a much higher generalisation than the personal. The Impersonal only can be Infinite, the personal is limited.

Thus we preserve the personal and do not destroy it. Often the doubt comes to us that if we arrive at the idea of the Impersonal God, the personal will be destroyed, if we arrive at the idea of the Impersonal man, the personal will be lost. But the Vedantic idea is not the destruction of the individual, but its real preservation. We cannot prove the individual by any other means but by referring to the universal, by proving that this individual is really the universal. If we think of the individual as separate from everything else in the universe, it cannot stand a minute. Such a thing never existed.

Secondly, by the application of the second principle, that the explanation of everything must come out of the nature of the thing, we are led to a still bolder idea, and one more difficult to understand. It is nothing less than this, that the Impersonal Being, our highest generalisation, is in ourselves, and we are That. "O Shvetaketu, thou art That." You are that Impersonal Being; that God for whom you have been searching all over the universe is all the time yourself—yourself not in the personal sense but in the Impersonal. The man we know now, the manifested, is personalised, but the reality of this is the Impersonal. To understand the personal we have to refer it to the Impersonal, the particular must be referred to the general, and that Impersonal is the Truth, the Self of man.

There will be various questions in connection with this, and I shall try to answer them as we go on. Many difficulties will arise, but first let us clearly understand the position of monism. As manifested beings we appear to be separate, but our reality is one, and the less we think of ourselves as separate from that One, the better for us. The more we think of ourselves as separate from the Whole, the more miserable we become. From this

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monistic principle we get at the basis of ethics, and I venture to say that we cannot get any ethics from anywhere else. We know that the oldest idea of ethics was the will of some particular being or beings, but few are ready to accept that now, because it would be only a partial generalisation.

The Hindus say we must not do this or that because the Vedas say so, but the Christian is not going to obey the authority of the Vedas. The Christian says you must do this and to do that because the Bible says so. That will not be binding on those who do not believe in the Bible. But we must have a theory which is large enough to take in all these various grounds. Just as there are millions of people who are ready to believe in a Personal Creator, there have also been thousands of the brightest minds in this world who felt that such ideas were not sufficient for them, and wanted something higher, and wherever religion was not broad enough to include all these minds, the result was that the brightest minds in society were always outside of religion; and never was this so marked as at the present time, especially in Europe.

To include these minds, therefore, religion must become broad enough. Everything it claims must be judged from the standpoint of reason. Why religions should claim that they are not bound to abide by the standpoint of reason, no one knows. If one does not take the standard of reason, there cannot be any true judgment, even in the case of religions. One religion may ordain something very hideous. For instance, the Mohammedan religion allows Mohammedans to kill all who are not of their religion.

It is clearly stated in the Koran, "Kill the infidels if they do not become Mohammedans." They must be put to fire and sword. Now if we tell a Mohammedan that this is wrong, he will naturally ask, "How do you know that? How do you know it is not good? My book says it is." If you say your book is older, there will come the Buddhist, and say, my book is much older still. Then will come the Hindu, and say, my books are the oldest of all. Therefore referring to books will not do. Where is the standard by which you can compare? You will say, look at the Sermon on the Mount, and the Mohammedan will reply, look at the Ethics of the Koran.

The Mohammedan will say, who is the arbiter as to which is the better of the two? Neither the New Testament nor the Koran can be the arbiter in a quarrel between them. There must be some independent authority, and that cannot be any book, but something which is universal; and what is more universal than reason? It has been said that reason is not strong enough; it does not always help us to get at the Truth; many times it makes mistakes, and, therefore, the conclusion is that we must believe in the authority of a church! That was said to me by a Roman Catholic, but I could not see the logic of it. On the other hand I should say, if reason be so weak, a body of priests would be weaker, and I am not going to accept their verdict, but I will abide by my reason, because with all its weakness there is some chance of my getting at truth through it; while, by the other means, there is no such hope at all.

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We should, therefore, follow reason and also sympathise with those who do not come to any sort of belief, following reason. For it is better that mankind should become atheist by following reason than blindly believe in two hundred millions of gods on the authority of anybody. What we want is progress, development, realisation. No theories ever made men higher. No amount of books can help us to become purer. The only power is in realisation, and that lies in ourselves and comes from thinking. Let men think. A clod of earth never thinks; but it remains only a lump of earth. The glory of man is that he is a thinking being. It is the nature of man to think and therein he differs from animals. I believe in reason and follow reason having seen enough of the evils of authority, for I was born in a country where they have gone to the extreme of authority.

The Hindus believe that creation has come out of the Vedas. How do you know there is a cow? Because the word cow is in the Vedas. How do you know there is a man outside? Because the word man is there. If it had not been, there would have been no man outside. That is what they say. Authority with a vengeance! And it is not studied as I have studied it, but some of the most powerful minds have taken it up and spun out wonderful logical theories round it. They have reasoned it out, and there it stands—a whole system of philosophy; and thousands of the brightest intellects have been dedicated through thousands of years to the working out of this theory. Such has been the power of authority, and great are the dangers thereof. It stunts the growth of humanity, and we must not forget that we want growth. Even in all relative truth, more than the truth itself, we want the exercise. That is our life.

The monistic theory has this merit that it is the most rational of all the religious theories that we can conceive of. Every other theory, every conception of God which is partial and little and personal is not rational. And yet monism has this grandeur that it embraces all these partial conceptions of God as being necessary for many. Some people say that this personal explanation is irrational. But it is consoling; they want a consoling religion and we understand that it is necessary for them. The clear light of truth very few in this life can bear, much less live up to.

It is necessary, therefore, that this comfortable religion should exist; it helps many souls to a better one. Small minds whose circumference is very limited and which require little things to build them up, never venture to soar high in thought. Their conceptions are very good and helpful to them, even if only of little gods and symbols. But you have to understand the Impersonal, for it is in and through that alone that these others can be explained. Take, for instance, the idea of a Personal God. A man who understands and believes in the Impersonal—John Stuart Mill, for example—may say that a Personal God is impossible, and cannot be proved. I admit with him that a Personal God cannot be demonstrated.

But He is the highest reading of the Impersonal that can be reached by the human intellect, and what else is the universe but various readings of the Absolute? It is like a book before us, and each one has brought his intellect to read it, and each one has to

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read it for himself. There is something which is common in the intellect of all men; therefore certain things appear to be the same to the intellect of mankind. That you and I see a chair proves that there is something common to both our minds. Suppose a being comes with another sense, he will not see the chair at all; but all beings similarly constituted will see the same things.

Thus this universe itself is the absolute, the unchangeable, the noumenon; and the phenomenon constitutes the reading thereof. For you will first find that all phenomena are finite. Every phenomenon that we can see, feel, or think of, is finite, limited by our knowledge, and the Personal God as we conceive of Him is in fact a phenomenon. The very idea of causation exists only in the phenomenal world, and God as the cause of this universe must naturally be thought of as limited, and yet He is the same Impersonal God. This very universe, as we have seen, is the same Impersonal Being read by our intellect. Whatever is reality in the universe is that Impersonal Being, and the forms and conceptions are given to it by our intellects. Whatever is real in this table is that Being, and the table form and all other forms are given by our intellects.

Now, motion, for instance, which is a necessary adjunct of the phenomenal, cannot be predicated of the Universal. Every little bit, every atom inside the universe, is in a constant state of change and motion, but the universe as a whole is unchangeable, because motion or change is a relative thing; we can only think of something in motion in comparison with something which is not moving. There must be two things in order to understand motion. The whole mass of the universe, taken as a unit, cannot move. In regard to what will it move?

It cannot be said to change. With regard to what will it change? So the whole is the absolute; but within it every particle is in a constant state of flux and change. It is unchangeable and changeable at the same time, Impersonal and Personal in one. This is our conception of the universe, of motion and of God, and that is what is meant by "Thou art That". Thus we see that the Impersonal instead of dong away with the personal, the Absolute instead of pulling down the relative, only explains it to the full satisfaction of our reason and heart. The Personal God and all that exists in the universe are the same Impersonal Being seen through our minds. When we shall be rid of our minds, our little personalities, we shall become one with It. This is what is meant by "Thou art That". For we must know our true nature, the Absolute.

The finite, manifested man forgets his source and thinks himself to be entirely separate. We, as personalised, differentiated beings, forget our reality, and the teaching of monism is not that we shall give up these differentiations, but we must learn to understand what they are. We are in reality that Infinite Being, and our personalities represent so many channels through which this Infinite Reality is manifesting Itself; and the whole mass of changes which we call evolution is brought about by the soul trying to manifest more and more of its infinite energy. We cannot stop anywhere on this side

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of the Infinite; our power, and blessedness, and wisdom, cannot but grow into the Infinite. Infinite power and existence and blessedness are ours, and we have not to acquire them; they are our own, and we have only to manifest them.

This is the central idea of monism, and one that is so hard to understand. From my childhood everyone around me taught weakness; I have been told ever since I was born that I was a weak thing. It is very difficult for me now to realise my own strength, but by analysis and reasoning I gain knowledge of my own strength, I realise it. All the knowledge that we have in this world, where did it come from? It was within us. What knowledge is outside? None. Knowledge was not in matter; it was in man all the time. Nobody ever created knowledge; man brings it from within.

It is lying there. The whole of that big banyan tree which covers acres of ground, was in the little seed which was, perhaps, no bigger than one eighth of a mustard seed; all that mass of energy was there confined. The gigantic intellect, we know, lies coiled up in the protoplasmic cell, and why should not the infinite energy? We know that it is so. It may seem like a paradox, but is true. Each one of us has come out of one protoplasmic cell, and all the powers we possess were coiled up there.

You cannot say they came from food; for if you heap up food mountains high, what power comes out of it? The energy was there, potentially no doubt, but still there. So is infinite power in the soul of man, whether he knows it or not. Its manifestation is only a question of being conscious of it. Slowly this infinite giant is, as it were, waking up, becoming conscious of his power, and arousing himself; and with his growing consciousness, more and more of his bonds are breaking, chains are bursting asunder, and the day is sure to come when, with the full consciousness of his infinite power and wisdom, the giant will rise to his feet and stand erect. Let us all help to hasten that glorious consummation.

Vivekananda widely popularised Vedanta in the West, but his teachings represent only one particular school, called Advaita (literally "non-dualism," often called "monism). Vivekananda somewhat modernised the original Advaita doctrine of Shankara. The main antagonists of Advaita are the dualistic schools of Vaishnavism.

Vedanta is closely aligned with its sister school, Mimamsa (meaning "enquiry"). The two are often called Purva Mimamsa and Uttara Mimamsa, denoting the earlier and later schools of enquiry. The earlier Mimamsa deals with *dharma* and focuses on rituals, particularly for promotion to higher planets. Its main texts are from the *Karma-kanda* section of the Vedas.

The later school, Vedanta, deals with Brahman and derives much from the *Jnana-kanda* section, especially the Upanishads and Vedanta Sutras (also known as the Brahma Sutras). Members of these two doctrines are traditionally at loggerheads, but they are essentially complementary. Much of modern Hinduism, though philosophically grounded in its Vedanta, borrows its ritualistic practice from *Purva Mimamsa*.

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There are ten principal schools of Vedanta. Of these, two are purely Advaita, one purely Dvaita and seven a synthesis of both. In Hinduism as represented in the UK, there are four important schools of Vedanta.

The Four Main Schools of Vedanta Represented in the UK

For any tradition to be accepted as a genuine Vedantic school, the founder must present commentaries on three scriptures – the Upanishads, the Vedanta Sutras, and the *Bhagavadgita*, collectively called the "*Prasthana trayi*."

Below are the four main branches of Vedanta along with: its founding theologian, the *Sampradaya*, the main representative movement in the UK.

School	*Theologian*	*Sampradaya*	*UK Movement*
Advaita (monism)	Shankara	*Smartas*	Ramakrishna Mission
Vishishtadvaita (qualified monism)	Ramanuja	Shri Vaishnavas	Swami Narayana Mission
SuddhAdvaita (purified monism)	Vallabha	Pushti Marg	Shree Vallabha Nidhi
Achintya Bheda-abheda	Baladeva	Gaufdiya Vaishnava	ISKCON (Hare Krishna Movement)

Common Misunderstandings

Vedanta (and all Hinduism) is entirely monistic, believing only in the all-pervading world-soul, Brahman, rather than a personal God.

This *Advaita* philosophy is certainly popular, and offers a simple explanation of the many deities. Nonetheless, many theologians have considered God to be a person. He is not merely an anthropomorphic representation, nor are the various deities and *murtis* simply incarnations or representations of an impersonal Supreme.

Thus Hinduism includes both monism and monotheism. It is misleading to call the Abrahamanic religions, "the monotheistic traditions," implying that monotheism is absent from the Eastern traditions. Vedanta includes many monotheistic schools. They may accept the existence of many gods and goddesses, but strongly emphasise the pre-eminence of the Supreme Deity.

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PURVA MIMAMSA, ADVAITA AND OTHER SCHOOLS OF VEDANTA

The Mimamsa (literally, enquiry) schools admit of *Shruti* (that which is heard, *i.e.* revelation) as a pramana. Usually, the word Mimamsa refers exclusively to the Purva Mimamsa school. The uttara Mimamsa school is more popularly known as Vedanta. A wide variety of texts, collectively called *Smriti* (that which is remembered), is taken as a lower authority that is valid when it does not conflict with *Shruti*. Other sources of knowledge accepted by both Purva Mimamsa and Vedanta are: *pratyaksha* (sensory perception), *upamana* (analogy), *anumana* (inference), *arthapatti* (postulation) and *anupalabdhi/abhava* (non-cognition/absence).

The first three are borrowed from the Nyaya-vaiseshika schools, but arthapatti and anupalabdhi are unique to the Bhatta school of Mimamsa thought. The Mimamsa school of prabhakara, called guru-mata, does not accept abhava as an independent pramana. Above all these, the veda stands as the supreme source of knowledge. The primacy concern of Mimamsa is textual exegesis, in addition to being a school of philosophy. Theology and religion are inseparable from philosophy in the Mimamsa schools. However, both Purva and uttara Mimamsa schools maintain that *Shruti* exists only to reveal that which cannot be known otherwise. Moreover, *Shruti* cannot deny a fact that is amenable to ordinary perception, *e.g.* no amount of repetition by the vedas that fire is cold will make fire cold. Thus, if there occurs a statement in *Shruti* that goes contrary to perception, it requires interpretation in a metaphorical or allegorical sense. Hence, there is a place for logical thinking based on perception and inference in these schools.

Purva Mimamsa interprets the vedas mainly as a set of injunctions (*vidhi*), with adjoining recital (*mantra*) and commentary (*arthavada*) portions. Thus, a statement, "he who is desirous of heaven should perform the jyotishtoma rite" is a *vidhi*, an injunction, and the rite itself is to be performed with the relevant mantras. The knowledge conveyed

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by this statement is not known by any other means, and its purpose is to impel the listener to action. According to Purva Mimamsa, this heaven is the highest salvation that is available to human beings, and thus the vedas are the sources of knowledge about both *dharma* and *moksha*.

The Upanishads and Brahmanas which relate to the said jyotishtoma rite are considered to be the arthavada, the explanatory commentary. The knowledge conveyed by the Upanishads is also not known by any other means, but the Upanishads are considered to be subordinate to the statements which impel man to action. Along with injunctions, there are also *pratishedhas*, statements which prohibit certain actions. The tradition of such textual exegesisis codified in the *Mimamsa sutras* of *jaimini*, with commentaries by *Sabara*, and sub-commentaries by *Kumarila Bhatta* and *prabhakara*. The Mimamsa that is taught in traditional vaidika pathasains in India today is based mainly upon the Sabara Bhashya and kumarila's Varttikas. This school is called Bhatta Mimamsa; the rival school called guru mata, following prabhakara's interpretation, is mostly extinct today.

Uttara Mimamsa, also called Vedanta, does not consider the Upanishads and Brahmanas as arthavada subservient to vidhis. Instead, they are seen to be sources of Brahman knowledge, addressed solely to those who seek *moksha*. The rituals enjoined in the vedas are applicable to the realm of *dharma*, but the one who seeks liberation does not merely desire a place in heaven; he is in search of ultimate Reality itself.

The Upanishads are viewed as those portions of the Shruti that address philosophical questions about Reality, here called Brahman. This tradition of exegesis follows the *Brahmasutras* of Badarayana. Within Vedanta, there is considerable difference of opinion on whether the Upanishads enjoin anything at all. The non-Advaita schools consider some of the statements in the Upanishads to be injunctions. The most famous example is *Atma va are drashtavya: Srotavya: mantavya: nididhyasitavya:*. Most, if not all, non-Advaita schools would take this to be an injunction.

In contrast, the advaitin approach to this statement is to treat it as advice to the mumukshu, not as an injunction. This is because the Atma is an accomplished fact; it is not a result of any action and therefore meditation on the innermost Atma cannot be enjoined. In this respect, knowing the *Atman* contrasts with the heaven which is attained as a result of the performance of the jyotishtoma sacrifice. According to Advaita Vedanta, the veda addresses itself to two kinds of audiences-the ordinary ones who desire the transitory heaven and other pleasures obtained as a result of ritual sacrifices, and the more advanced seeker who seeks to know Brahman.

Thus, the Purva Mimamsa, with its emphasis on the Karma kanda of the vedas, is meant for the first audience, to help lead its followers along the way. However, the Vedanta, with its emphasis on the Jnana kanda, is meant for those who wish to go beyond such transient pleasures.

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As a Mimamsa, Vedanta has a function of textual exegesis, with its uniquely Indian views on the origin, relevance and scope of revelation. In itself, any school of Vedanta can be considered to be a philosophy and also as a religion, there being no distinct line that can be drawn between the two, at least in the Indian context. Vedanta literally means "the end of the vedas." This can be interpreted in more ways than one.

From the textual point of view, the Upanishads, the source books of the Vedanta, are considered to be the end of the vedas. From a philosophical point of view, Vedanta is the fruit or the goal of all the vedas. The philosophical interpretation is more preferable in the tradition. This is because the vedic texts are considered to be eternal, revealed scripture, so that they have no definable chronological beginning or end. Advaita Vedanta is the oldest living school of Vedanta. It is also generally considered to be the premier school of Vedanta, and the word Vedanta is used synonymously with Advaita in most literature.

Vedanta bases itself mainly upon three sets of texts, called *Prasthana trayi*. These are the Upanishads (*Shruti Prasthana*), the Bhagavad Gita (*Smriti Prasthana*) and the Brahmasutras of Badarayana (*Nyaya Prasthana*). A working definition for a Hindu tradition to be called Vedanta is that it should have definitive commentarial texts on the three *Prasthanas*. Consequently, the following brief description overlooks important traditions like those of Kashmir Saivism and southern Shaiva siddhanta.

An essential identity between *Atman* and Brahman is upheld in *Advaita* Vedanta. The personality of Shankaracharya and the force of Advaita teaching is so strong that most post-Shankaran schools of Vedanta consciously define their doctrines against Advaita thought. A number of pre-Shankaran vedantins seem to have been proponents of *bhedabheda* (bheda+abheda, or *identity* in *difference*). The earliest post-Shankaran school of Vedanta is also one of ***bhedabheda***. This is seen from the commentaries of bhaskaracharya, which are still available, although the number of followers of this school is quite small. In the 14th century, Sripati pundita, a commentator from the virasaiva tradition, also identifies himself as a bhedabhedavadin. However, in general, the virasaiva school does not pay much attention to vedantic questions. Some early Advaita Vedanta influence on the monistic schools of Kashmir Saivism is also postulated. However, these schools base themselves upon an independent set of texts, namely the *Shaiva Agamas*, and do not consider themselves to be vedantic in origin.

A body-soul relationship between *Atman* and Brahman is upheld in the school known as *Visishtadvaita*. Here, the highest Brahman is considered as a "person" with a body consisting of souls and matter. Theistic devotion to this highest Brahman is held to be the sole means to final moksha. The Visishtadvaita schools split on the question of identifying the highest Brahman with Shiva or Vishnu, the Great Gods of Hinduism. The school of Srikantha regards Shiva to be the highest Brahman, and teaches a variety of Visishtadvaita. However, appayya Dikshita reinterpreted Sriantha's thought in terms of

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Advaita Vedanta, and consequently, this school has come to be known as *Sivadvaita*. Thus, only the Vedanta schools associated with Vaishnava religion have maintained an identity distinct from Advaita Vedanta.

Most people understand the word *Visishtadvaita* to refer to the Sri Vaishnava school of Ramanujacharya, which considers the highest Brahman to be Vishnu as Srimannarayana, and continues to have a distinct identity in southern India, with major centres at Srirangam and Kanchipuram. There is remarkable similarity between the teachings of Ramanuja and Sriantha, except that while the former insists upon the supremacy of narayana, the latter insists upon that of paramasiva. Many northern bhakti schools trace their thought to Ramanuja's tradition, through the person of ramananda, a Sri Vaishnava monk, who travelled extensively in the north and had many disciples. These Vaishnava monks also belong to the tradition of *tridandi samnyasa*, as compared to the *ekadandi samnyasa* tradition of the Dasanami monks. The *tridandi* ascetics carry a staff that consists of three sticks tied together, symbolizing the unity of three separate entities (God, individual soul and matter). The *ekadandi* monks carry a single stick, symbolizing the essential identity of Brahman and *Atman*.

Complete difference and dualism is taught in the *dvaita* school of Ananda*Tirtha* (also known as purnaprajna). This is a Vaishnava tradition, centered at Udupi in Karnataka. Ananda*Tirtha* was the disciple of an Advaita Dasanami monk named achyutapreksha *Tirtha*, but he completely rejected Advaita teaching. Because of this historical legacy, monks of the dvaita tradition continue to use Dasanami suffixes, especially *Tirtha*, and are *ekadandi samnyasins*, although they would not interpret their single staff as a symbol of Brahman-*Atman* identity. The gaufdiya vaishnavas claim to be affiliated to the dvaita tradition, but their teaching of *Achintya bhedabheda* is quite different philosophically. They have also affiliated themselves with the *tridandi samnyasa* tradition in recent times. And there is the devotional Vaishnava school of Vallabhacharya, which is known as pushti-marga, and as *SuddhAdvaita*. Despite this name, this school should not be confused with Advaita Vedanta. The gaudiya vaishnavas have substantial following in Bengal, and the vallabha school in Gujarat. nimbarka, another Vaishnava teacher, taught *dvaitadvaita*, which is similar to *bhedabheda*. This is a Vaishnava school that has a small following in the plains of the Yamuna river.

Advaita Vedanta

The Advaita philosophy is not easy to explain briefly, and it is not the purpose here to repeat in a www few page what takes whole volumes for accomplished experts. But we will prvide you with a brief synopsis of the various aspects of Advaita Vedanta.

A very important assumption in all Vedanta is that man suffers from bondage in the course of his life in this world. This is said to be *samsara*, which involves being caught in an endless cycle of births and deaths. The quest therefore is to seek a way out of this

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bondage, to break the cycle of rebirths and attain moksha or liberation. The most important issues in Vedanta have to be understood with respect to what constitutes bondage and what constitutes liberation.

The Advaita school is of the view that *Jnana* (knowledge) of man's true nature is liberation. Bondage arises from ignorance (*avidya*) of man's true nature, and therefore removal of ignorance roots out this bondage. Liberation is therefore nothing more or nothing less than man knowing his true nature. This true nature is his innermost essence, the *Atman*, which is nothing other than Brahman. He who knows this, not merely as bookish knowledge, but through his own Experience, is liberated even when living. Such a man is a *Jivanmukta*, and he does not return to the cycle of rebirths.

Brahman: It may be noticed that at first glance, Advaita's solution to the problem of man's liberation does not seem to involve God as a Creator or a Saviour at all. If all that is required is to know one's own true nature, what role does God have to play in this universe? Advaita's answer to this issue is buried in the advaitic conception of Brahman. One is the view of the *Brahmasutra* that Brahman is at once both the instrumental and the material cause of the universe.

The *Brahmasutra* holds such a view because there is nothing that can be said to exist independent of Brahman. Is Brahman then just a name for a universal set-the superset of all things in this universe? Not so, because Brahman has been described as beyond all change, whereas the perceived universe is full of change. Still, this universe is said to have Brahman as the only cause. At the same time, to understand Brahman truly is to know. It to be devoid of parts and diversity, and beyond all causality/action. Such a conception of Brahman derives from the Upanishads, which say *sarvam khalvidam brahma*—all this is indeed nothing but Brahman—on the one hand, and *neha nanasti kinchana*-there is no diversity here-on the other. Thus, the conception of Brahman as a Creator in Advaita is a unique one, and directly relates to the Advaita views on causality.

Parinama and Vivarta: There are different theories of causality described by Advaita vedantins, but they are all agreed that Brahman is the sole cause of the universe, *i.e.* both the instrumental and the material cause of the universe. The axiom that the One Brahman is the cause of the many-fold universe is the foundation on which the entire system of Advaita Vedanta is based, and numerous efforts have been made over the centuries, to address logical problems arising out of it. This Brahman is also held to be eternal and changeless.

It is easy to understand Brahman as the instrumental cause of the universe. This view is not very different from the traditional perspective shared by almost all religions—some creator is usually credited with having created this universe. This creator is the instrumental cause of the universe. What differentiates the *standard Vedanta position* from such general theistic views is that Brahman is simultaneously also the material cause of the universe. In other words, creation is never *ex nihilo*, but proceeds out of Brahman. Itself, although Brahman remains unchanged.

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Common-sense views of material causality always involve some kind of change. Thus, for example, milk is said to be the material cause of curds. However, in the process of curdling milk, the milk cannot be recovered. All we have at the end is the curds, the milk being irretrievably lost. This kind of causality involving change is called ***parinama***. There is another kind of material causality. For example, gold is the material cause of an ornament made out of gold.

In the process of making the ornament, the metal does not change into something else. It is only drawn into another form, from a lump to an ornament; the gold remains gold. This kind of causality is called *Vivarta*, where the material cause itself does not change into something else. The chandogya Upanishad makes very telling use of this kind of causality in its illustrations of how "Being" alone is the original cause (*sadeva saumya idam agra As it, ekameva advitiyam*), and how all perceived change is only in the realm of name and form, dependent on language (*vacarambhanam vikaro namadheyam*). The reality of gold is quite independent of what shape it is in.

Although Shankaracharya makes use of both kinds of causality (*parinama* and *Vivarta*) in his analogies, he denies that Brahman's role as the material cause of the universe involves any change in the essence that is Brahman. In the logical extreme, both *parinama* and *Vivarta* views of causality are deficient, as they presume a separate reality of the effect, apart from that of the cause. Therefore, the most subtle arguments in Advaita Vedanta turn upon the *ajati vada* notion-that there is no real creation. *Vivarta* and *parinama* are both seen as convenient ways of describing causality, only if some provisional reality is conceded for the notion of creation.

Those who follow the *drshti-srshti vada* also maintain that Brahman is beyond all causality. However, most post-Shankaran authors, who teach in accordance with what is called the *srshti-drshti vada*, opt for a *Vivarta* notion of causality, as far as accounting for all creation is concerned. It should be remembered that the conception of Brahman as both the material and instrumental cause of the universe implies a very special kind of causality, one that is not similar to any other, and that cannot therefore be captured completely by any analogy.

It is as if Brahman has acted upon itself in order to produce this universe, that is full of change. Yet, the Upanishads abound with passages denying that any change is possible in Brahman, and indeed Shankaracharya denies that Brahman really acts. Brahman is also described as devoid of all attributes, along with passages that glorify Brahman as Ishvara, the Lord of this universe, with infinite attributes.

Nirguna and Saguna Brahman: To resolve such passages in the Upanishads, Advaita Vedanta maintains that really Brahman is devoid of all attributes, and is therefore known as *nirguua*. Brahman may be described as in the Upanishads, as Truth (*satyam*), Knowledge (*jnanam*), Infinite (*anantam*), or as Being (*sat*), Consciousness (*cit*), Bliss (*Ananda*), but none of these terms can be truly interpreted as attributes of Brahman as

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a Super-person/God. Rather, it is because Brahman exists, that this whole universe is possible.

It is because Brahman exists that man ascribes attributes to Brahman. However, Brahman's true nature cannot be captured in words, for all these attributes are ultimately just words. Hence, it is man's ignorance of its true nature that postulates attributes to Brahman, thereby describing It in *saguna* terms (with attributes). This saguna Brahman is Ishvara, the Lord, whose essential reality as Brahman is not dependent on anything else, and does not change because of the production of this universe. Therefore, Advaita holds that Brahman's own nature (*Svarupa-lakshaNa*) is devoid of any attributes (*nirguua*), while It is seen for the temporary purposes of explaining creation (*tatrastha-lakshana*) to be Ishvara, with attributes (*saguna*).

So much for *saguna* and *nirguua* Brahman. If Brahman cannot be held to have suffered any change because of creation of the universe, then what is the status of this universe? Since the cause does not undergo any change in the process of producing the effect, it is held that the cause alone is Real. The universe only partakes in reality inasmuch as it is to be considered as dependent on Brahman. Therefore the Upanishads say, " *sarvam. khalvidam. brahma*." If the universe is considered to be independent of Brahman, then it has no real Reality, although the world of human perception can never reveal this truth. This is simply because Brahman Itself is never an object of human perception. It is this characteristic of dualistic knowledge, derived from perception alone, that prompts the advaitin to call it *mithyajnana* (false knowledge).

Avidya and Maya: Why does human perception fail to see Brahman directly? Shankaracharya attributes it sometimes to *avidya* (ignorance) and sometimes to *maya* (the power to deceive). As the brhadaranyaka Upanishad puts it, *"vijnataram, are kena vijaniyat?"*-How is the Knower Itself to be known? It also stands to reason, therefore, that any effort at characterizing Brahman falls far short of Brahman. No words reach Brahman; how can mere verbal descriptions claim to describe It? Advaita now turns to the ancient technique of *adhyAropa-apavada* (sublation of superimposition) to explain this.

Thus, although Brahman is called the instrumental and material cause of the universe, Advaita tells us that this is only a preliminary view of Brahman, motivated by a need to explain creation of the universe. In order to understand Brahman, one has to go beyond this preliminary view, and understand Brahman in itself, not necessarily in relation to the universe. Then it is understood that the whole universe is only superimposed on the underlying Reality that is Brahman. To really know Brahman, one needs to sublate this superimposition, and look at the substratum (*Adhishthana*) that is Brahman. As for the exact nature of *avidya* and *maya*, later authors seem divided into two major schools of thought, namely the Bhamati and the Vivarana schools.

Brahman = Atman: What then of the human self, the Jiva? It is here that Advaita comes up with the most radical answer, one that is unacceptable to all other schools of

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Vedanta. According to Advaita, what is called the universe is in reality not other than Brahman. Similarly, what is called the Jiva is in reality, the *Atman*, which is also nothing other than Brahman itself. The real Jiva is the *Atman*, which is unchanging, ever free, and identical with Brahman.

This is said on the basis of Upanishadic passages where the *Atman* is explicitly equated with Brahman. This equation of *Atman* with Brahman is also explained by means of *adhyaropa-apavada*. By sublating the superimposition of human shortcomings and attributes on the *Atman*, the pure *Atman*, the substratum, shines forth as Brahman Itself. The mani-fold universe and the individual self, which considers itself bound, are both superimposed upon that Transcendental Reality which is Brahman. Once the superimposition is understood for what it is, the individual is no more an individual, the universe is no more the universe-all is Brahman.

This doctrine of Advaita should not be misinterpreted to mean that the human self is in and of itself God, without any qualification whatsoever. Shankaracharya most emphatically asserts that such is not his intention. On the other hand, he is at great pains to point out that one who is desirous of moksha needs to overcome his human shortcomings in order to achieve full liberation. Shankara prescribes rigorous prerequisite qualities for the person who is to study Vedanta.

These form the practical aspect of the effort to rise above and sublate the characteristics of the human Jiva, in order to understand the *Atman*/Brahman. The non-dual reality of the *Atman* is revealed to the intense seeker, as an experience that defies words. One might call it a mystic experience of Brahman, in which to know Brahman is to be Brahman. Thus, rather than being atheistic or non-theistic, Advaita Vedanta is meta-theistic: it points to the basic underlying Reality of all, including what humans call God, what humans call the universe, and what humans call human. This Reality is the unchangeable Brahman.

Tattvamasi: At this juncture, it is instructive to look at the advaitin interpretation of the chandogya statement *tattvamasi*, following Shankaracharya. This is one of the four statements that have become well-known as the Upanishadic mahavakyas, which equate *Atman* with Brahman. The four most important mahavakyas (one from each veda) are:

"*ayamatma brahma*" (mundaka)

"*tattvamasi*" (chandogya)

"*aham brahmasmi*" (brhadaranyaka)

"*prajnanam brahma*" (aitareya)

Shankara explains *tattvamasi* as follows. *Tat* is a common designation for Brahman in the Upanishads, while *tvam* (thou) addresses the student. The sentence states an equation of two seemingly different entities *tat*-that, and *tvam*-thou, by means of the verb *asi*-are. In general, Brahman (*tat*) is commonly understood as Ishvara (saguna Brahman),

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with an infinity of attributes, including the power of creation. *Tvam* is the individual who is bound, who is embodied, and who is in need of liberation. The difference between *tvam* and *tat* seems to be a matter of common knowledge for all individuals. What is the reason for the Upanishad to teach an identity then? An identity cannot be stipulated, even in infallible Shruti, if there is a real difference. Keeping in mind that Shruti is infallible, Advaita therefore concludes that really there is no ultimate difference between *tat* and *tvam*.

The identity expressed in a statement like *tattvamasi* is therefore held to be Real, and its realization constitutes the height of knowledge (*Jnana*). Direct experience of this *Jnana* is in fact moksha. It also follows that since this identity is not perceived normally, difference arises out of *avidya*, ignorance of the true nature of Reality. Since Shruti is superior to perception, this identity is indeed the supreme truth, all difference being in the realm of relative perception. If non-dualism is the true nature of Reality, why is this difference perceived in the first place? Given Advaita's basis on the non-dualistic scriptures, the perception of difference remains, in the final analysis, inexplicable.

This is labeled "*anirvacya / anirvacaniya* " in Advaita-something that can never be fully understood by the human mind. Since perception of duality presupposes *avidya*, no amount of logical analysis, itself based on this duality, will satisfactorily explain *avidya*. Hence, Shankaracharya is not much interested in explicating *avidya*, except to acknowledge its presence in all human activity, and in trying to overcome it to understand Brahman.

Vyavahara and Paramartha: This exegesis of scripture leads to the well-known advaitic doctrine of two levels of understanding: *Vyavaharika satya* (phenomenal or relative reality or just "reality", where duality is seen) and *paramarthika satya* (transcendental reality, or "Reality", non-duality). One important Upanishadic source for Advaita Vedanta's theory of two levels of truth is the analysis of the *Atman* as "*neti, neti*"-not this, not this. This is from the brhadaranyaka Upanishad.

This Upanishad also describes the highest state of the *Atman* in purely non-dualistic terms-"*yatra tvasya sarvam Atmaivabhut, tatra kena kam pasyet?. .... vijnataram are kena vijaniyat?*"-Where the *Atman* alone has become all this, how is one to see another?. .... How is the Knower to be Known? Most advaitins point to the quotation from the brhadaranyaka that immediately precedes this: "*yatra tu dvaitamiva bhavati,. ..*"-where there is duality, as it were,. ..-as the scriptural basis for saying that perception of duality is an appearance only, "as it were" and not the supreme Reality.

This rejection of all characterization as partial at best, and ultimately untrue, means that the *Atman* is beyond all duality, and all attempts to describe. It fail, because language itself presupposes duality. This *via negativa* approach is very much favoured in Advaita Vedanta. This emphasis on identifying the *Atman* with Brahman by means of sublating the commonly understood characteristics of each term, to affirm the real nature of the *Atman*, is central to Advaita vedanta.

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Vishishtadvaita

Vishishtadvaita Vedanta is a sub-school of the Vedanta (literally, *end or the goal of the Vedas*, Sanskrit) school of Hindu philosophy, the other major sub-schools of Vedanta being *Advaita* and Dvaita. *Vishishtadvaita* (literally "Advaita with vishishtam") is a non-dualistic school of Vedanta philosophy. It is non-dualism of the qualified whole, in which Brahman alone exists, but is characterised by multiplicity. It is a school of Vedanta philosophy which believes in all diversity subsuming to an underlying unity. Ramanuja, the main proponent of Visishtadvaita philosophy contends that the Prasthana Traya, *i.e.* the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and The Brahma Sutras are to be interpreted in way that shows this unity in diversity, for any other way would violate their consistency.

Visishtadvaita philosophy of Ramanuja provided the philosophical basis for the establishment of Sri Vaishnavism and gave Vedantic backing to the brimming devotion of the Alwar saints and their composition of wonderful poetry and devotional songs in praise of Lord Vishnu. The succession of great Master-Expositors and spiritual giants of Vishishtadvaita school starts with the twelve Alwars, who left behind an imperishable legacy of Tamil devotional poetry in the form of 4000 songs, now called the Nalayira-prabandham.

The Visishtadvaita school of philosophy is probably the first school to interpret the Vedanta texts without being influenced by Buddhist thought.

Philosophers: The Visishtadvaitic thought is considered to have existed for a long time. The earliest known works of the philosophy are not available now. The names of the earliest of these philosophers is only known through Ramanuja's Vedanta Sangraha. In the line of philosopher's considered to have expounded the Visishtadvaitic system, the prominent one's are Bodhayana, Dramida, Tanka, Guhadeva, Kapardi and Bharuci. Besides these philosophers, Ramanuja's teacher Yamunacharya is credited with laying the foundation for what culminates as the Sri Bhashya.

Bodhayana: Bodhayana is considered to have written an extensive vritti (commentary) on the Purva and Uttara Mimamsas.

Tanka: Tanka is attributed with having written commentaries on Chandogya Upanishad and Brahma Sutras

Natha Muni: Natha-muni of the ninth century AD, the foremost Acharya of the Vaishnavas, collected the Tamil Prabandhams, classified them, made the redaction, set the hymns to music and spread them everywhere. He is said to have received the divine hymns straight from Nammalvar, the foremost of the twelve Alwars, by yogic insight in the temple at Alwar Thirunagari, which is located near Tirunelveli.

Yamunacharya: Yamunacharya, who renounced a kingship and spent his last days in the service of the Lord at Srirangam and in laying the fundamentals of the Vishishtadvaita philosophy by writing four basic works on the subject.

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Ramanuja: Ramanuja is the main proponent of Visishtadvaita philosophy. The philosophy itself is considered to have existed long before Ramanuja's time. Ramanuja continues along the line of thought of his predecessors while expounding the knowledge expressed in the Upanishads, Brahma Sutras and Bhagavad Gita.

Vedanta Desika: Vedanta Desikan, one of the foremost learned scholars of medieval India, wrote more than a hundred works in Sanskrit and Tamil. All are characterised by their versatility, deep spiritual insight, ethical fervour and excellent expressions of devotional emotion in delightful style. His Paduka-sahasram is a classic example. He was a great teacher, expositor, debater, poet, philosopher, thinker and defender of the faith of Vaishnavism.

Vedanta Desikan is considered to be the founder of Vadakalai sect of Sri Vaishnavism.

Pillai Lokacharya: Pillai Lokacharya is considered to be the founder of Tenkalai sect of Sri Vaishnavism.

Visishtadvaita Philosophy: Every philosophy has to explain its position on Epistemology, Ontology, Metaphysics and Theism (*i.e.* the role and position of the Supreme).

Epistemology

Pramgas: Pram, in Sanskrit, refers to the correct knowledge, arrived at by thorough reasoning, of any object. Pramga (*sources of knowledge*, Sanskrit) forms one part of a tripumi (trio), namely,

1. Pramt, the *subject*; the *knower* of the knowledge
2. Pramga, the *cause* or the *means* of the knowledge
3. Prameya, the *object* of knowledge

In Visishtadvaita Vedanta, the following three pramgas are alone accepted as valid means of knowledge:

- Pratyakchha — the knowledge gained by means of *Perception*
- Anumna — the knowledge gained by means of *Inference*
- Chabda — the knowledge gained by means of *Shruti*

Chabda or Shruti Pramga occupies the highest position in matters which cannot be settled by Pratyakchha or Anumna.

Ontology: In more specific terms Vishishtadvaita conclusions may be briefly summarised as below. The Absolute Supreme Reality referred to as Brahman, is a Transcendent Personality with infinite superlative qualities. He is Narayana, also known as Lord Vishnu. He creates the other two members of the Trimurti, namely, Creator Brahma and Shiva, the Lord of Deluge.

Narayana is the Absolute God. The Soul and the Universe are only parts of this Absolute and hence, Vishishtadvaita is panentheistic. The relationship of God to the Soul

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and the Universe is like the relationship of the Soul of Man to the body of Man. Individual souls are only parts of Brahman. God, Soul and Universe together form an inseparable unity which is one and has no second. This is the non-duality part.

Matter and Souls inhere in that Ultimate Reality as attributes to a substance. This is the qualification part of the non-duality.

Metaphysics

Ethics: Souls and Matter are only the body of God. Creation is a real act of God. It is the expansion of intelligence. Matter is fundamentally real and undergoes real revelation. The Soul is a higher mode than Matter, because it is conscious. It is also eternally real and eternally distinct. Final release, that comes, by the Lord's Grace, after the death of the body is a Communion with God. This philosophy believes in liberation through one's Karmas (actions) in accordance with the Vedas, the Varna (caste or class) system and the four Ashramas (stages of life), along with intense devotion to Vishnu. Individual Souls retain their separate identities even after moksha. They live in Fellowship with God either serving Him or meditating on Him. The philosophy of this school is Srivaishnavism, a branch of Vaishnavism.

Comparison with Western Non-dualism: Baruch Spinoza, the 17th century rationalist philsopher, in his magnum work Ethics establishes the nature of GOD. Spinoza's pan-organistic God (*i.e.* God revealed as orderly nature) is comparable to Brahman (having the individual selves' and Universe as its body).

Spinoza makes the following propositions on the nature of God, in his work "Ethics". These positions closely reflect the Vishistadvaitic position on the nature of Brahman:

Proposition XI: God, or substance consisting of infinite attributes, of which each expresses eternal and infinite essentiality, necessarily exists.

Proposition XV: Whatsoever is, is in God, and without God nothing can be, or be conceived.

Proposition XVII: God acts solely by the laws of his own nature and is not constrained by anyone.

Proposition XVIII: God is the indwelling and not the transient cause of all things.

Proposition XIX: God and all the attributes of God are eternal.

Proposition XXX: Intellect, in function finite, or in function infinite, must comprehend the attributes of God and the modifications of God, and nothing else.

Dvaita

Dvaita (originally called Tattvavada), a school of Vedanta (the most widespread Hindu philosophy) founded by Shri Madhvacharya, stresses a strict distinction between God (Vishnu) and the individual living beings (Jivas). According to Madhva, souls are not

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'created' by God but do, nonetheless depend on him for their existance. Satguru Sivaya SubramuniyaSwami explains dualism in his book, *Dancing with* Shiva, by stating that in dualism, God is seen as the efficient cause of the universe and not as the material cause. He is the potter causing the clay to emerge, rather than serving as the source of the clay itself.

Dvaita Philosophy: Like Ramanuja, Madhvacharya espoused a Vaishnava theology that understands Brahman to be endowed with attributes and a personal God, Vishnu. By Brahman, he referred to Vishnu, as per his statement "brahmashabdashcha Vishhnaveva" that Brahman can only refer to Vishnu. Madhva states that Vishnu is not just any other deity, but is rather the singular, all-important and supreme one. Vishnu is always the primary object of worship, and all others are regarded as subordinate to Him. The deities and other sentient beings are graded among themselves, with Vayu, the god of life, being the highest, and Vishnu is eternally above them.

Dvaita, or Dualistic philosophy, also known as Bheda-vada, Tattva-vada, and Bimba-pratibimba-vada, is the doctrine propounded by Ananda *Tirtha* (also known as Madhvacharya) that asserts that the difference between the individual soul or Jiva, and God, (Îshvara or Vishnu), is eternal and real. Actually, this is just one of the five differences that are so stated—all five differences that constitute the universe are eternal.

The Dvaita doctrine was summarized by Vyasa *Tirtha* as comprising nine tenets or Prameyas.

Impact of Dvaita Movement

- Madhva's Dualistic view, along with Shankara's Advaita or Non-dualism, and Ramanuja's Qualified Non-dualism, or Vishishtadvaita form some core Indian beliefs on the nature of reality.
- Madhva is considered to be one of the influential theologians in Hindu history. He revitalized an Hindu monotheism in light of attacks, theological and physical, by foreign invasion. Great leaders of the Vaishnava Bhakti movement, in Karnataka, for example, Purandara Dasa and Kanaka Dasa were strong proponents of the Dvaita tradition. Also, the famous Hindu saint, Raghavendra Swami, was a leading figure in the Dvaita tradition.
- Madhva's theology heavily influenced those of later scholars such as Nimbarka, Vallabha, and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. B.N.K. Sharma notes that Nimbarka's theology is a loose re-write of Madhva's in its most essential aspects. Vallabha even "borrowed without acknowledgement" a verse from Madhva's 'Sarva-shastrartha-sangraha'. The followers of Chaitanya claim a link to Madhva, though such a link is not historically tenable or theologically plausible.
- Madhva's singular contribution was to offer a new insight and analysis of the classical Vedantic texts—the Vedas, Upanishads, Brahma Sutra, Mahabharata,

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Pancharatra, and Puranas—and place uncompromising duality, which had been ravaged by attacks from Advaita, on a firm footing. Before Madhva, Nondualism was rejected by others such as the Mimamsa tradition of Vedic exegesis, and by the Nyaya tradition of classical logic. However, it was only he who could build a cogent alternative system of Vedanta that could take on Advaita in full measure.

Comparison to Mainstream Hinduism: Some teachings of Madhvacharya look different from mainstream Hinduism. One example is his doctrine of eternal damnation. Generally Hindus believe in the eventual salvation of every soul. Many of the doctrines in the Dvaita traditions resemble those of strict monotheism that is predominant amongst followers of Semitic religions. Dvaita provides a greater role to Bhakti than other schools of Vedanta.

Followers of Dvaita believe in the supremacy of Vishnu over other deities including Shiva and do not believe in the Hindu concept of Trinity, Trimurti of Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva. Shiva is worshipped as a subordinate god (deva). Though this appears intolerant, it is because of the strong monotheistic belief in a non-Impersonal God unlike Advaita for which the identity of God does not matter as it is Nirguna. Historically, Dvaita scholars have been involved in vigorous debates against other schools of thought, especially Advaita.

Whereas Adviata preaches that *Atman* and Brahman are one and the same, which is not evident to the *Atman* till he comes out of a so-called illusion, Sri Madhvacharya puts forward the truth as Brahman (Vishnu) and *Atman* (soul) to be eternally different, with God always the most superior one. It is the same point that Madhvacharya reinforces in one of his doctrines. .. *"Yadi Namaparo Na bhaveth Sri Hari, khathamasya vasheth Jagathedhabhooth. Yadi Namanathasya Vashe Sakalam, Khatamevathu nithya suknham Na Bhaveth"*

The translation of the above is:

> *"If you feel there is no God, how do you explain as to why you cannot free yourself from the limitations on Earth? If you feel YOU are the one in control of everything (as Advaita preaches that Soul and God are one and the same), then how come you don't enjoy happiness always and are also subject to sorrow and pain (as God is supposed to be an eternity of happiness)?"*

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4

VEDANTA—ESSENTIALS OF THE HIGHER VALUES OF LIFE

Some Basic Truths of Life: You have all come here for study. The traditional method of studying the Indian scriptures takes a minimum period of twelve years, and mind well, Saturdays and Sundays also working days and there were six hours of teaching and eight hours of self-study daily. In the first phase, they taught the Sanskrit language, grammar, *nyaya-shastra,* logic, etc. Then they used to teach the preliminary texts, the *prakarana granthas,* like Viveka-Chudamani, Tattva-Bodha, Atma-Bodha. Then only, the *prasthana-trayee,* the three main treatises, namely, Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita, the principal Upanishads and the Vedanta-Sutras which is also known as Brahma-Sutras were taught.

The normal period of study required in this traditional ancient *gurukula* method, was twelve years; but sometimes it was more, fifteen years or even twenty years, to study the intricate interpretation of words, their hidden meaning and significance. The different schools of thoughts may have different interpretations of the same combination of words. One such example is the combination *tattvam-asi*. One school may say it means 'thou art That.' Another school may say it is combined with the previous word and when separated it should read *atattvam-asi*, meaning exactly the opposite. Due to such intricacy of the Sanskrit language, a full-time study over a very long period is necessary.

Nevertheless, in this short period of teaching here, a brief outline of the Indian and the Western philosophies and the essence of the Indian scriptures is given to you here, and you will just get an entry into the Indian scriptures, so that you can pursue self-study after going back home. This serves the purpose of *sadhakas* and *jijnasus.*

The traditional twelve year study and passing the various examinations and getting the degrees of *shastri* and *acharya* is necessary for those who want to start their own *pathashala* or take up the career of a teacher or become a *purohit*. That is a totally different field of study in which is included a thorough knowledge of various sacraments,

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rites and rituals covering various ceremonies like naming the child, thread ceremony, marriage ceremony. This is known as *karmakanda*. A *purohit* is an important member of the Hindu society as no important ceremony can be taken up without him. In the past this was quite a lucrative profession and came in the family from generation to generation.

The Object of the Course: The study of the various paths of Yoga and of Upanishads and Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita provide practical guidance for Sadhana. In the West, there are theological seminaries for the Christians. But, for the philosophical study there is a separate department in many Universities where they teach the thoughts of the ancient philosophers like Plato and Aristotle as well as modern philosophers like Kant and Hegel. Like that, in every country there is some system for the study of both these aspects.

One may ask what is the purpose of all these philosophical texts? Why such a phenomenon called philosophy came into human social process of evolution? There are various branches of spiritual literature with relevance to day to day life. But what is the relevance of the study of philosophy?

The purpose of my elaborating these details in connection with philosophical study is to ask you, "What is the object of this study of Yoga and Vedanta? What do all the various Eastern and Western philosophers seek? What do you expect to obtain by this study? What is the purpose of the spiritual knowledge?"

All the secular sciences left the phenomenon of man unexplained, left the origin of man unexplained. So the thinkers who wanted to know about this, probed into the mystery of man and his origin and thus came into existence the subject of philosophy.

What is the subject, scope and area of study of philosophy? It is twofold:

(1) It is a study of man. What is the phenomenon of life? What exactly is he constituted of? What is his origin? What is his ultimate destination?

(2) It is a study of the universe in which he lives. What is the nature of the universe?

Philosophy seeks to understand the phenomenon of life. So it has to have a minimum of two dimensions: the beings who live the life and the universe in which they live. Thus, man and the world become the two minimum reducible unavoidable subjects. A deeper study of these two factors leads to the study of a third factor: the origin of the man and the world. What is the origin of the universe? From where this world, sun, moon, planets, stars, galaxies, nebulae and all that have come? Who governs the phenomena of various natural cycles like day and night, different seasons and the phenomenon of rains which is just sufficient to support and sustain the life? What is the origin of man? There must be some source. So a third factor enters in the philosophical analysis and study. This third factor, the unknown source or origin of man and the universe, becomes an important part of the philosophical thought.

One may justifiably ask, "What do I gain by studying this unknown factor?" It must have some practical utility, some valid value. Otherwise, it would have been a for the

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time-being subject and disappeared soon. But it has persisted for a very long time and is growing and expanding, it is being enhanced and augmented generations after generations. This means that it must have some intrinsic and intriguing value in it.

Suppose you start with a pragmatic and logical approach and come to a certain conclusion that this must be the origin and source of the universe. In fact, most of the conclusions of the Western philosophical thought are derived in this way. They show tremendous speculative heights and a very very amazing great depth and details, incisive analysis, reasoning, logic and wisdom. They theorised their conclusions. They did not accept the previous conclusions and often disproved them by logical arguments and reasoning. They have a quest of perfection and always try to improve upon the existing theories. In this way, great philosophical systems have been evolved in the Western world by great scholars, thinkers and philosophers.

The Role of Saints: The Eastern philosophy is developed in a totally different manner. Our entire philosophical system is based upon and has been derived from the already existing knowledge which is found to be existing from ancient times, beyond the known history of humanity. God only knows when it originated. Its time is not traceable.

All our philosophical systems that are existing now have originated from the in-depth study of that Knowledge which was already existing. Our ancient seers and sages had already presented us certain conclusions about the basic philosophical questions and processes and sealed it ultimately with the seal of indisputable authenticity and genuineness of *Aparokshanubhuti*, their direct personal Experience of the Truth. In other words, the proof and validation of their conclusions was not the logical reasoning, analysis and arguments but this personal Experience. That is the uniqueness of our philosophical system.

In all the countries, in all the races, in all the cultures of the world we observe a unique phenomenon. Quite apart from the philosophers and scholars, there is a separate, unique and distinct category of people, the saints. Every race has produced some saints. Many of these saints were not very highly educated; some of them had even never gone to school, they were illiterate. Yet the world remembers them. Even in the modern world of science and high technology many people study their lives and teachings, and draw inspiration from them though they were neither philosophers nor worldly people. Even after thousands of years their lives and teachings have remained a source of inspiration.

In the beginning came the worship and sacraments, the *karmakanda*. They realised, "This is not enough. Even if we worship daily, even if we perform all the sacrifices and oblations, all the *yajnas* and *yagas* and all the *samskaras,* we can never be free from sorrow and grief, pain and sufferings, old age and ailment, tension and anxiety, fear and fright, fights and quarrels, diseases and death. We have no lasting peace of mind. So we must find out something higher, something which is beyond this and which will really free us. We must find out the state which is *dvandvatita* and *trigunatita,* transcending the pairs

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of opposites and the three *gunas*. We must find the state beyond sorrow, the state of eternal peace. Let us contemplate on That only."

Ultimately, in some wonderful moment in the history of India, in the history of mankind, some of these intrepid and gallant seekers, explorers of the unknown and unseen realm, came to experience the Ultimate Truth, the Supreme Reality. They had the direct Experience. They shouted in wonder and amazement, shouted in joy, "Ah! This is That! This is the Light of lights! This is the Reality, the Truth!"

Aparokshanubhuti: What does the direct Experience mean? All the knowledge a human individual gathers in this material world is through the perception of senses. If you have a good hearing faculty you gather knowledge through all kinds of sounds; you can distinguish all types of sound, all types of speech, words, etc. Similarly, if you have a perfect faculty of seeing, your cognition of the entire world is through sight. In the same way, you are able to perceive heat and cold, soft and hard through the sense of touch. Similarly you perceive the world through the sense of smell and the sense of taste. So, whatsoever you know about the world right from the birth onwards, is through the five senses of seeing, hearing, touching, smell and taste in the form of *roopa, shabda, sparsha, gandha and rasa.* (Appearance, speech, touch, smell and taste) These are the five dimensions of your cognition.

These are five types of experiences through which you perceive the whole world and acquire all the knowledge. So this is indirect knowledge, it comes through one of the senses or a combination of them. If any one of these senses is absent, that part of perception is absent. A person born blind has no perception of colour, form and appearance. That aspect of the world does not exist for him at all.

In direct Knowledge the senses play no roll. *Aparokshanubhuti, the* direct Knowledge arises only when the senses are completely still. The senses are useless for direct Knowledge. As a matter of fact the senses are the main obstacle in direct Knowledge, they come in the way of the direct Knowledge. It arises without the medium of these senses, when the senses are totally still, the mind is desireless and when the seeker enters a very subtle state of higher consciousness. One just experiences in the depth of one's own consciousness, one's own real Self, transcending the material world and its cognition. That is the direct Experience. That is the *Aparokshanubhuti.*

In some wondrous era in our ancient history, the seers had the great Experience and came face to face with the Truth, came face to face with the Ultimate Reality. The moment they entered into the direct Experience, they were amazed, they were struck-dumb; because, there was a total transformation of their whole consciousness and they became filled with the Light. The darkness of ignorance vanished instantaneously, all doubts, all questions vanished forthwith. They experienced the total Knowledge; everything became clear straightway; no more any questions, any doubts, remained. That Knowledge is known as *Brahma-jnana* and the knower is known as a *jnani*. Thus, whatever is to be

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known became known to them. The origin and the source of the universe and the man, also became known to them. They became the very embodiment, the very personification of Knowledge itself.

Vedanta: The records of these purely transcendental experiences comprise and constitute the contents of the end portion of *Vedas* known as *jnanakanda* or the *vedanta.* Some of these seers have very compassionately narrated how they attained It, what were all the Sadhana and *tapas* they did. So Vedanta is the most important and valuable portion of the Vedic wisdom heritage. It forms the very basis and foundation of spiritual life. It is the source and origin of all the Indian philosophical systems, whether it is the Absolute Monism of Sankaracharya, or Qualified Monism of Ramanujacharya or Pure Dualism of Madhvacharya or Dual-nondual Doctrine of Nimbarkacharya or Pure Dualism of Vallabhacharya or *Achintya Bhedabheda* of Gauranga Mahaprabhu. All the great *acharyas* based their philosophical systems on different interpretations of *vedanta.* All these philosophical systems, the schools of thoughts, are known as *vedanta.*

There are many schools of philosophy in the East, Far-East and the West. But the main fundamental subject, namely, the purpose of human life is more explicitly and emphatically spelt out in the East. Before making a detailed study of the philosophical systems, let us inquire into some basic questions: What is our purpose of this study? What do we obtain or gain from such study? What are their fundamental findings and teachings? What do these seers want to convey to us?

When we try to probe this particular question, we find that what they want to convey to us ultimately, is something so very apparent, so very absolutely clear and plain that nobody will ever question it a second time. They have given us some plain facts, some home-truths of life. The way by which they reached them at that time must have required a great deal of thinking, a great deal of contemplation, a great deal of analysis and speculation and all that. We should be very grateful to them, for they have proclaimed them and very clearly put before us the conclusions they arrived at. They have spared us all the difficult spadework, all the agony. Now it is like reaching Mt. Everest by an aeroplane or helicopter instead of reaching there by one's own effort, by one's own self, slowly trekking the long route, climbing the extremely difficult mountains and making the final attempt to reach the summit again and again. Whatever is necessary for acquiring the Knowledge, our ancient seers have already done somehow and have clearly laid down the path for us. They have clearly derived the ultimate Truth. We have simply to follow their path.

The Basic Truths: Now I will tell you something that I usually tell on the last day as a concluding message. Without telling that I am not closing my message. But something prompts me from within to tell this today itself. Once you know it, your entire approach to your study, to your life, will be changed and it will take a new *bhava,* a new viewpoint altogether.

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The ultimate highest discovery of the ancient sages and seers is recorded in the *Upanishads,* which reveal the great truths and teachings. It is the great grace, compassion and blessedness of our ancients that some sages might have thought: 'In the times to come, who is going to study this very abstract Vedantic philosophy, understand it and acquire thorough knowledge, ponder and contemplate on it and attain Illumination?' They must have envisaged that the whole world will be career oriented and money will rule the entire life. All the time and energy of people will be spent in earning money and keeping the pot boiling at home.

Though the teachings of Upanishads is the highest and the greatest invaluable treasure of the mankind, very few people will be able to take interest in it. So the quintessence of the entire wisdom teachings, knowledge and spiritual experiences of the Upanishads is given to us, to the entire mankind, in a very concise yet very simple, lucid and interesting form in the Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita. In this amazing and epigrammatic poem, all the truths are included. If we try to keep in view what basic, fundamental yet practical and pragmatic home-truths Bhagavad-Gita gives us, we can make our life based on them and enrich it.

Just imagine in eighteen chapters, in seven hundred verses only, the quintessence of the entire teachings, the wisdom knowledge of all the Upanishads, the highest spiritual experiences of so many illumined sages and seers, are treasured in such a simple and easy-to-understand way! Some of these verses are the preamble, the prologue and the narrative and the actual number of verses giving the intricate teachings is much less. It is amazing how in such a concise treatise, in such a brief discourse everything necessary for our uplift and supreme welfare is given to us! If we try to keep in mind the basic and fundamental yet practical and pragmatic home truths this wisdom teachings of Bhagavad-Gita gives us, and if we base our life on them, we can attain our highest good. We cannot afford to ignore these basic truths. Unless our life is based on these truths, our life will be wasted. This is one interpretation of the implication of these truths.

Truth is God: Another implication of the fundamental Truth is: It is the ultimate Reality. That alone is the real Truth and compared to That, everything else is untrue. All other things fail to fulfil the test of genuineness and authenticity of Truth which That fulfils completely. So the definition of that ultimate, eternal Truth is *Tat Sat.* This is another implication, the highest one, of Truth.

There are some lesser implications also. The facts of life which no one contradicts are also known as truths. There are two views about this: there are certain facts which are so self-evident that there can be no dispute about them. These are known as *svatah-siddhah* truths. There are many such truths elaborated in the Upanishads, and the Gita has reproduced them in a simple, lucid form.

Such truths are narrated in more interesting, very simple very easy-to-understand story form in the Puranas. In the Puranas a truth is woven in a very absorbing big story

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and many people may miss it. The narration is so interesting and elaborate that many people take note of the stories and bypass these truths and the preaching.

Certainty of Death: Whereas Bhagavad-Gita puts them in such a straight, direct, undiluted and concise form that no one can ever miss them. One such truth that all of you must always remember and which you cannot afford to forget even a single day of your life is proclaimed at the very beginning of Lord Krishna's teachings in Bhagavad-Gita. What is that? That great truth is: *The absolute certainty of death.* In one categorical statement He says, *Jaatasya hi dhruvo mrityuh* (Certain is the death for the born. II-27). For everyone who is born, death is certain. How many people have really pondered over the importance of this truth? You should ponder: 'Why this has been so categorically proclaimed?

In what way this concerns me? How should I relate myself to this great truth? Why *Jagadguru Purnavatara* Bhagavan Krishna told this to Arjuna?' He told this to Arjuna in order to bring him out of delusion, in order to take him out of nervous break-down, in order to bring him out of the weeping condition. He asks, 'For whom are you weeping? If you don't kill them, do you think that they will live for ever? Even if you don't kill them, one day they will die; die they must, in one way or the other. Even at this moment many are being born and many are dying. This is the plain truth of life. Why don't you realise it fully? Why don't you take it calmly? What is the use of breaking your head for something which is inevitable, for the truth which cannot be changed or altered?'

What was Arjuna's delusion? He thinks: 'All these people will die in the battle-field.' All of them had to die, death is inevitable for all of them. But Arjuna thinks: 'If he does not fight they will not die, they will live.' Krishna says: 'What a foolish notion! Whether you fight or not, all are going to die and you too will die.'

What is the lesson? The lesson is: If we do not recognise and realise the certainity of death very plainly and clearly, and if we do not accept this truth in living our daily life, we are also living in delusion. We do not want to face the hard reality of life. If we are living our life setting aside this truth, we live our life in a state of ignorance and delusion. The root cause of all sorrow is this delusion. When someone near to us dies, we are dismayed and despaired as if something most unexpected has happened. But it is not at all unexpected. Lord Krishna clearly says: 'Everyone who is born has to die.' The time of death is most uncertain; but sooner or later everyone has to die. This truth is based on the actuality and we must accept it and always remember it.

Let us now see the constructive dimension of this truth. In what way it can be useful to us? If we recognise this first truth so forcefully brought out by Lord Krishna in Bhagavad-Gita wisdom teachings and if we always keep it in mind, we will never postpone anything that is important, we will never postpone our duties, we will never say: 'I will do my duty later'. Who is sure of tomorrow? Then how can you say: 'I will do it tomorrow?' It is said, *alone you come and alone you go back.* It is so correct from one point of view.

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But if we look from another point of view, one is never alone. From the very moment an individual *jivatma* is born, it is never alone; it is always accompanied by the Lord of Death. The whole life is a slow process of death, a constant march towards death. With every breath, with the passing of every moment, we are moving closer to death. You are never alone; the shadow of death always accompany you. The Lord of Death takes away your life every moment, little by little. At the last moment, he takes away the *pranas* and goes away and the body becomes lifeless.

If you recognise this truth: One day this life will terminate, one day I will die, I will not be here. I must ponder over this and resolve: 'Whatever I have to do, I must apply myself to it now itself, right at this moment; I will never postpone it to tomorrow.' Now you cannot be a loser. You are free from the delusion of tomorrow. Guru Maharaj used to say: Never say I will do it tomorrow. Tomorrow is the most deceptive word. There is no such thing like tomorrow. If you postpone something on tomorrow and go to sleep today; but when you wake up, it is already today and not tomorrow. God's ration is *today* only; tomorrow is our concept.

Past is finished, it has slipped from your hands and you cannot recover it again. There is no use projecting your important work and duty in future, because it has not yet come, it is not in your hands. What you have in your hands is *now,* the present moment only. Remember this always, every moment of your life.

You should always remember the death; remember that this life must terminate one day and you have to leave this world. Therefore resolve with firm determination: 'I will attain whatever I have to attain, whatever the goal of life I have. Right now, from this moment itself I shall engage myself in it, *I shall strive for the goal of life, right now.* I will attend to all my aspiration, duties and obligations, my *kartavya karmas.* Let me apply myself to it right now calmly and quietly, without tension or anxiety. I shall not postpone it, I shall not show any laziness or lethargy.'

God has wonderful sense of justice and has given to all of us enough time. Everyone has twenty-four hours a day, the same ration to everyone without any discrimination. Whether you are a professor or doctor, a big man or a beggar, you have the same ration. If you plan your time properly, there is time for everything, everything can be achieved in this life itself.

There is an English writer called Arnold Benett. He has written a wonderful book, 'How to live on 24 hours a day?' It implies that no one really lives for all the 24 hours a day. We fritter away little, little moments from morning to evening. This book proves that if you can make use of those moments which are unnecessarily wasted on trifle, irrelevant things, you have enough time for everything.

So, the very first truth proclaimed by Bhagavad-Gita is of great importance. You must live with full awareness that one day the life must end in death. Therefore, whatever you have to do, should be done right now. Start doing it right now. You cannot afford to remain

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idle and waste away the precious time. Time wasted is the time lost for ever, you can never get it back, you can never use it. Time does not give you a second chance. Whatever you have to do, whatever effort and exertion you have to put forth to achieve the goal, you have to do it right now. In this way, you will be able to achieve what has to be achieved.

The World is an Abode of Unhappiness: Now arises the next question: What it is that diverts us away from our goal? What is it that deceives and dupes us and makes a fool of us? What is it that makes us repent and regret that I have not done what I should have done? When the time of departure comes, you are very sad thinking: 'I have not been able to do what I ought to have done, I have not been able to become what I wish I had become.'

It is the deceptive attractions of the sense objects all around us. They entice us saying: 'Come, come! You will get all the happiness from us'. Some beautiful sight says, 'You will get happiness from me.' Some pleasant, attractive sound, smell, taste or touch says, 'Come, come! You will get happiness from me.' So, all our time and all our energy are consumed by numerous attractive objects of this wondrous supermarket of *Maya-bazaar*. Your attention is scattered through the five holes of senses.

You do not realise that this is only a delusion and there is not an iota of real happiness in these objects. It is only some momentary pleasant nervous sensation. It is not a real happiness. Such pleasant experience is purely a gross, primitive, biological process and a phenomenon common to all the animals. When a sense object comes in contact with the related sense organ, the tactile nerve catches the sensation and sends a message to the central nervous system which passes the message to the brain and the brain feels a momentary pleasant sensation. You are now hooked by this sensation, you are enslaved. All these pleasant sensations are momentary and depend on the proper functioning of the apparatuses. Even if any one of them, a sense organ, the connecting nerve or the receiving centre in the brain is impaired, there is no sensation pertaining to that sense faculty. If you have lost the sensation of taste, you will not be able to experience any taste, even if the most delicious dish is given to you. If your optic nerve has become week, the most beautiful sight will have no impact on you even though your eyes may remain open.

How long is this experience of pleasant sensation lasts? You are eating your favourite tasty dish. So long as the food is in the mouth there is the pleasant sensation. But once it goes in, it is all over. In a flash of a moment the sensation disappears. But who thinks about this? If you ponder over it, if you analyse it impartially, you will realise that it is only a purely biological nervous sensation and this cannot be called real happiness. But we are duped by it and we interpret it as happiness and we waste our life in chasing the sense objects. Can there be a greater folly? It is a great blunder. It is not wisdom. There is no happiness here. On the contrary He who created all these, says:

Ye hi samsparshajaa bhogaa duhkhayonaya eva te;
Aadyantavantah Kaunteya an teshu ramate budhah.

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[The enjoyments that are born of contacts are only generators of pain, for they have a beginning and an end, O Arjuna! The wise do not rejoice in them. B.G. V-22]

He makes it quite plain that all the enjoyments arising out of the contact of any sense object are the source of sorrow and pain only, there is no happiness in them. This is the second great truth given by Lord Krishna in Gita. This is a scientific and analytical way of looking at the problem.

He puts this truth in a general form also. He says, 'O Arjuna! Do you know what is the nature of this world? It is *duhkhaalayam-ashaashwatam* [the place of pain and is non-eternal. B.G. VIII-15]. This world is a world of transitory objects with names and forms. The transitory objects cannot give you lasting, eternal, real happiness. This world is an abode of misery and sorrow.'

In a negative way, He describes the characteristics of this world as: *Anityam-asukham lokam imam* [this impermanent and unhappy world. B.G. IX-33]. This world is characterised by a total lack of happiness. The senses are *duhkhayonaya eva te*, generators of pain. Again and again He reiterates this great truth that there is only pain and sorrow that you can obtain from this world.

Buddha's Four Truths: When Buddha attained the Illumination, he discovered four great truths pertaining to the human life:

- Life is full of suffering;
- The cause of the suffering is craving, desire (*trishna*);
- The possibility of complete cessation of the suffering by destroying desire; and
- The way to bring about the ultimate cessation of the suffering.

The first step is to become convinced that this world is an abode of sorrow and suffering. The next step is to know the cause of the suffering. Once we know the cause of the suffering, there is an unending hope for the mankind. Because, once you remove the cause the suffering will end. The suffering is an effect. Once the cause is removed the effect does not arise at all, it is automatically eliminated. Once you know the cause, you can find out by one way or the other, some device to remove it. The first discovery everyone knew; but so long as they do not know the cause of the suffering, people live with it thinking I can be happy with the coexistence of sorrow.

The third discovery is also very important. All these sufferings are not unavoidable or inevitable. They are not permanent. If the sufferings were eternal, if there had been no possibility of ending the sufferings, the question of finding a way to end them would have not arisen at all. But Buddha discovered that we can put an end to all the sufferings. He assured us that this is certainly possible.

Lastly, Buddha discovered the way to end all the suffering and putting completely an end to all the suffering. It is called The Noble Eight-fold Path. Like the eight-stage path to Liberation given by Maharshi Patanjali in his Yogasutras, Buddha has also

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discovered an eight-fold path to cessation of suffering: right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort or endeavour, right mindfulness and right meditation. Like in Yogasutras, Buddha also gives minute details of each of these. The first one is Right View and Buddha gives ten aspects of it.

Today I am telling this to reiterate that death is inevitable. Therefore, be alert! Be up and doing. Apply yourself quickly to whatever you have to do. Fulfil all your obligations and duties. *Be up and doing on the path of Liberation, on the path of Divine Perfection, the great grand, glorious Goal of human life*. You have to apply yourself to that Goal right now. What is that comes in your way as an obstacle? The delusion of happiness here. Convince yourself firmly that there is no happiness here and there can never be happiness here. This world is petty abode of *janma-mrityu-jaraa-vyaadhi-duhkha* (the evils of birth, death, old age, sickness and pain. Gita XIII-8), an abode of sorrow, sufferings and unhappiness only.

You are enslaved by the sense objects only if you think that there is some pleasure, some happiness in them. But once you discover their true nature, you are free. But once you are convinced that there is no happiness here, you are no longer deluded, you are no longer made fool of by the sense objects, you are wise. Through all these attractions you can remain untouched and unaffected by them. You will say: 'Yes, I know your nature. You can no longer fool me.' You become established in *anasakti,* total detachment. Even if you are surrounded by hundreds of attractive objects of pleasures, you are not perturbed. You know their real nature and so cannot be deluded. You go through your life as a master of the situation and not as a slave to every attractive sense object of name and form. You are the in-charge of your life.

If you have realised these truths, you become totally detached. Now you are steadily, serenely advancing to the Goal, absolutely unaffected by the sense objects. The basis of your detachment is discrimination and wisdom. You know that there is nothing in them; now they cannot enslave you.

A mother was frightening a little boy by covering the bush with a black cloth and was saying: 'Don't go there. A devil is hiding there.' The father thought that she is unnecessarily frightening the child, this is a bad psychology. The son will afterwards be always afraid. So one day he took the child near the bush and removed the cloth and said: 'Look, there is no devil here.' The child told his mother: 'Now you can never make me afraid of that black cloth. I know there is nothing in it. I know its real nature.'

Like that once you know the real nature of the world through constant discrimination, it will never be able to dupe you, delude you. You will no more be afraid of it. Now you can proceed straight towards the target like an arrow shot from the bow.

This is the second truth about the life about which I have to tell you. All the philosophers tell us that our tenure here is temporary, we are not residents of this earth plane, we are just the travellers. Our life is a journey with a definite destination. The important

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point is that you should always remember the Destination, the Goal. So many people go from here to the Badrinath shrine day after day. The journey is very difficult, arduous and full of discomforts. But they have only one idea fixed in the mind: 'I will reach my destination sooner or later. I will have the great fortune of having *darshan* of Lord Badrinath.' There is no thought about the discomforts and hardships.

The Divine Destination: The next great truth proclaimed by the Upanishads and Bhagavad-Gita is about our Divine Destination. Your destiny is to transcend the sorrow and suffering, pain and misery, defects and imperfections and to attain the state of glorious Perfection that is characterised by Bliss-absolute, Peace-profound. Perfection, Peace and Bliss. This is your birth-right. You are given this human birth only to attain that state. You are the heir of that profound Experience of unalloyed, unmixed, hundred per cent pure Bliss, a distilled quintessence of absclute Bliss. That Bliss, that Peace, that Happiness is imponderable.

It does not come from any source, It does not depend on any object. That Bliss, that Peace, that great sense of Perfection, that Light is known as Brahma, God, Bhagavan, Paramatman, Allah, Khuda. We call It the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God. You may call It by any name, no matter what name, label or appellation you give It, It is that great Experience absolute where all the sorrows disappear, where all the doubts vanish, where all the questions disappear. It is transcending them all, It is transcending all sorrow, pain, grief, suffering, delusion and bondage. You are in a state of absolute freedom and fearlessness.

The Goal of human life is That. You have full potential for attaining It. It is your birth-right. You are given this human birth to attain That. That Experience is called *Kaivalya Moksha Saamraajyam*. That is to be kept as your Goal. Your efforts to attain That should never be postponed for *Jaatasya hi dhruvo mrityuh* (Certain is the death for the born. B.G. II-27). You should not be tempted and diverted into side-channels. There is nothing anywhere else. They are like water of mirage. You should know and remember always, *duhkhaalayam-ashaashwatam* [the place of pain and is non-eternal. B.G. VIII-15]. There is not an iota of real happiness here.

All these are fundamental truths. All the different schools of Vedanta whether it is the Absolute Monism of Sankaracharya, or Qualified Monism of Ramanujacharya or Pure Dualism of Madhvacharya or Dual-nondual Doctrine of Nimbarkacharya or Pure Dualism of Vallabhacharya or *Achintya Bhedabheda* of Gauranga Mahaprabhu, all of them declare these truths. They all tell this is a passing world; one day you have to die. You do not belong to this world, you are only a traveller. The human life is a great journey towards that grand Goal. It is not to be wasted after petty things. If your life is properly directed and properly used, *you can attain That in this very life*. You can attain Immortality, eternal Bliss and Peace at the end of your life. This is the quintessence of the Indian Philosophy. Contemplate on this. Don't be lost in nomenclature and unnecessary details. *You should*

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know the heart of philosophy: You are Divine, you are the Immortal Atman. You are given this human birth to regain that Experience of your lost Divinity. Do it now. Do not postpone.

The message of the day is:

- Remember always the death.
- Do not fall prey to the attractions of petty things.
- You are given this human birth to regain your lost Divinity. The goal of life is to attain It.
- Do it now. Be up and doing. *Uttishthatha Jagrata*. Awake, arise! Do not stop till the goal is reached. Keep on, keep on, keep on.

God bless you all.

The Golden Thread of Vedanta

The Divine Life Society was founded by worshipful Guru Maharaj Swami Sivanandaji, in order to proclaim to the whole world of the modern times, the way of living one's life so as to be able to attain, experience and become established in the Divine Perfection which is inherent in each one of the human being, as his unalienable, true, eternal nature. All of you have an apparent human personality which is only the external facade of your Reality.

This human personality is not the Reality according to the Vedanta. You have to know this because you are participants in the Yoga Vedanta Academy Course. So you must know what Vedanta has to say about your life, about this world and about everything pertaining to life in this world.

You have come here as *jijnasus*. *Jijnasus* are those who are keenly eager for attaining *jnana,* the Knowledge. *Jijnasus* attending this course have a special uniqueness, a special distinction. You are *jijnasus* with a difference.

Apara-vidya: What is that difference? The difference is: All other seekers of knowledge are trying to acquire *apara-vidya,* the worldly knowledge; whereas you seek to acquire *Para-vidya*. This is a basic, fundamental difference. *Apara-vidya* enables you to get, keep, possess and enjoy objects of this world. But Vedanta says, this world is only a temporary dream. *Apara-vidya* enables you to get distinction, name and fame, and the objects you can possess, keep and enjoy.

The World is Transitory: But all these only for a brief while; because the whole world is transitory, subject to decay, subject to ultimate dissolution. Everything here is unstable, nothing here endures, nothing here is lasting, nothing here is permanent. Therefore this world is not having any permanent validity.

What is the meaning of everything? *Aabrahmaa sthoola paryantam*. From a blade of a grass up to the position of *Brahmaa*, the creator; *Brahma-loka*, the greatest, the biggest status in the cosmic scheme of things—everything is worthless, valueless. This is what

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has been declared by the great sages who have known the impermanence of all the things. So I have said that your outer personality is not the reality according to the *Vedanta.*

The Reality: Why did I say according to the Vedanta? Vedanta gives a specific definition for Reality. What is truly, authentically and genuinely Real? You have to try to understand with a very subtle intellect, what Vedanta wants to convey to you. That alone can be called Sat, really true, the Reality which is beginningless and endless, which is ever present, ever *is*, in all the three periods of time.

It always existed in the past, It does exist in the present and will always exist in the future as well. It never will cease to be. There is a further qualification: That is the Reality which abides always, in all the three periods of time without undergoing any change, It always remains the same. Nothing can alter It, nothing can change It. That is something which is always in Its Fullness, in Its Perfection.

This is the classical specific definition of *Sat*, the Reality: It is always present in all the three periods of time, past, present and future and It is never subject to any change, It is unalterable, unchangeable. If you apply this test to anything in this world, you will find that all the things fail to fulfil this requirement. All the things change right from the beginning. Your body changes right from the birth, so it cannot be the Reality. Your human personality did not exist before you were born. The duration of its existence here on the earth plane is for a limited time. One day, everyone who is born has to go. Everyone knows this. It does not require any study of any big philosophy.

Death the Leveller: Gurudev used to sing: *Time sweeps away kings and barons.* Even the big people who wield great deal of power, were powerless before old age, disease, decay and death. The glories of our personality are shadows only, they are not substantial things. There is no power against fate. Death lays its icy hands on kings and barons. Even the biggest sceptre and crown must tumble down in the dust one day. An emperor may be holding a sceptre as a symbol of royal power and may be wearing a crown as a symbol of the royal status, but all these must go in dust and become as worthless as the dust.

The title of Gurudev's poem is "Death the Leveller." Death makes everyone equal, whether he is a beggar on the street-side or a great king, a president of a big state or an ordinary labourer breaking stones on the road-side or cutting wood in a forest. When death comes they all become the same, either they turn into a little ash or become food for the worms under the earth! This is a common human experience.

So Gurudev says:

Time sweeps away kings and barons!
Where is Yudhishthira? Where is Ashoka?
Where is Shivaji? Where is Napoleon?
Where is Valmiki? Where is Shakespeare?

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Where are those mighty people? Where are Yudhishthira and Ashoka? One is the greatest from the point of view of Dharma, the righteousness, and the other is great from the point of view of vastness of the empire. The empire of Ashoka stretched from South India and went beyond the North India and covered Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kabul and Gandhar. Archaeologists find his coins and Ashoka's inscription carved on rocks and stone pillars and in all these areas. All the great warriors, great poets have disappeared.

Lord Krishna who is the creator, preserver and dissolver of countless billions of universes, who is the supreme Lord Himself, He opens the wisdom teachings of Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita and right in the beginning of His teachings says; "*Jatasya hi dhruvo mrityuh.* [Certain is the death for the born]." For one who is born, death is certain. That is the only certain thing, other things may be uncertain. Therefore, this human personality which did not have any existence before we were born, will come to an end one day. One may live very long, say a hundred years, hundred and ten years, but ultimately this life has to end. If it does not end, you yourself will pray to God: 'O God! Please take me away from here. It is painful to live here; I cannot stand, I cannot even sit, I cannot eat. Every moment is painful. Please relieve me from the burden of this body.'

Where do you go after death? The human personality is not there. That means the human personality is *asat*. Anything which is changing is *asat*. You were something in infancy, something different in your childhood, adolescent, youth and old age. Everyday there is a change in your mood, change in your attitude, change in your health condition. Everything changes. Instability is the second name of this body. This body is changeful, it has a beginning and an end. It is temporary in time. Therefore, it cannot be the Reality.

Your Essential Nature: Which is the unreal aspect of your being? What is *anitya, asat,* non-real and changeful? The Reality is always present, always unchanging; It is without a beginning and an end. Why? Because It is a part of the Cosmic Principle that is eternal, infinite, unchanging, permanent, imperishable. That Cosmic Being is called the Universal Soul or Paramatma. They call It God, they call It Allah, they call It Almighty Father in the Heaven, or Ahura Mazda or Tao or the Supreme Reality. They may call It by any number of different names, but It is the same One, the same Universal Essence who is the source, the support and the fulfilment of all the existence. That is Perfect, That is Full, That is Divinity. You are a part of That in your inner Reality, in your essential Nature.

That Divinity is inherent in you. It is your true identity, essential identity, eternal identity. That eternal identity is immortal Spirit, That eternal identity is perfectly Divine.

This Reality is the very central Principle on which Gurudev has focused his message. He says: "You are immortal Atman; you are perfectly Divine. This life is a rare gift, a golden chance, a unique opportunity given to you. You should always make use of this life to become awakened within. Unfold this slumbering Divinity. Your endeavour should be to transform yourself into a Divine personality, into a Perfect Being."

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You are not just a human personality with all the drawbacks and weaknesses; you are simultaneously a Divine personality. You are the Divinity on the earth. "Awaken the sleeping God within you," says Swami Vivekananda. This is the great task of your life. Live your life in such a way, make your thinking, feeling and actions in such a way, that all these become a great help for bringing about an inner process in this direction; so that they become a wonderful support for the specific techniques and practices for bringing about this unfoldment.

Gurudev gave his message as a message of Divine Life, living the life in such a way that the Divinity within you becomes awakened through Bhakti-Yoga, Jnana-Yoga, Raja-Yoga and various other Yoga systems and constant practice. If your inner life and spiritual practices are supported by a helpful, and become supplementary and complementary to your outer life which also partakes of the same quality of divinity, then your whole life becomes a unified process of trying to attain one single objective of the Divine Perfection.

That is the great objective with which Gurudev founded this institution; and to initiate you into the ways and means of bringing about this more rapidly, more effectively, he set up this Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy. His objective was to initiate you into the inner skills, the secrets of *sadhana* and practical spiritual life so that you can live actively an inner spiritual life.

The Vedanta Doctrines: All the Upanishads taken together are called Vedanta, because they comprise the Jnana-kanda, the end portion of the Vedas. Vedanta literally means the end portion of the Vedas. These Upanishads are the culminating portion of Vedas; it is pure *jnana*. So Vedanta means *jnana*. The Jnana-kanda of the Vedas is the record of transcendental Experiences and the ways and means of attaining It. So the contents of the Upanishads is about the nature of that transcendental Experience and about what happens to the person when he attains that Experience.

How many kinds of Vedanta are there? Innumerable. Because, unfortunately the learned scholars who study the Upanishads deeply, reflect over them and try to understand them, have understood them in various ways. So each one gives his own interpretation of what he thinks is the correct interpretation of the Upanishads. According to the interpretation given by that particular person who understood it in a particular way, a school of thought of Vedanta arises.

All the human beings are not the same. They have different intellects and different ways of understanding things, different approaches and different ways of looking at things, both physically, as well as, through the intellect. Later on, the scholars started to interpret the structure of the words of Vedanta. One school says: *'Tattvam-asi'*, the other tries to prove that it is *'Atattvam-asi'*. Due to such varied interpretations, certain well recognised systems have come into existence. The amazing part of it is that all these systems form valid parts of the total body of *Sanatana Dharma. Sanatana Dharma* does not take any side or validate any particular system. These are merely interpretations of

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the scholars and have become part of it and it tolerates them and treats as valid. So all these schools are called Vedanta.

The Absolute Monism of Sankaracharya (788-820) is called Kevala Advaita Vedanta Siddhanta, a little modification of which is known as Vishishta-Advaita Vedanta or Qualified Non-dualism of Ramanujacharya (11th century). Sankaracharya said *jiva* and *Brahma* are one. Ramanujacharya agrees with this oneness but interprets that it is so in a specific way only. In the Absolute Monism, *jiva*-hood is considered as a myth or an imaginary existence only; there is no real existence of *jiva. Ekameva-advitiyam Brahma, Neha naanaasti kinchit*. One and only One exists, there is not many. There is only One without a second. He is uncompromising about this and as though to emphasise it, he says: 'If you think anything else exists, it is not real but it is your *bhranti* only.' You may argue: 'How do you explain *jiva*?' he says: 'What do you mean? There is no *jiva* to be explained. *Jiva*-hood is a myth, it is non-existent, it is a non-entity.' What he was trying to prove was his own *Aparoksha-anubhuti*, his direct Experience of the Reality, his Advaitic Experience of non-dual Consciousness.

Nimbarkacharya (1162) gave another interpretation known as Dvaita-Advaita Vedanta Siddhanta, the Dual-Nondual Doctrine of Vedanta. He says: "It is inexplicable thing! There is *dvaita* as well as *Advaita*.

Then came Madhvacharya (1199) who propounded Dualism or the Dvaita Vedanta Siddhanta. Individual soul and the Supreme Soul are proved by him to be different and separate entities. They can never become one. In essence the individual soul may be like the Supreme Soul, but it is a *jiva's* status, can never be the same, it can never have the same power or glory as that of the Supreme. He is Supreme, individual is under Him. The distinction, the *bheda*, is eternal and so they remain two, as *jivatma* and *Paramatma*.

Then came another Acharya called Vallabhacharya (1479) who gave Shuddha-Advaita Siddhanta, the Pure Non-dualism, which is also known as the Pushti Marga.

Five hundred years after Sankaracharya, another great scholar, great grammarian and a brilliant intellectual took his birth in Mayapuri, Nabadweep. He is known as Sri Krishna Chaitanya (1486). He expounded a certain school of thought of philosophy and mysticism, known as Achintya Bheda-Abheda Doctrine. He says:

'The nature of the absolute Reality is impossible for us to grasp. Our mind is a petty, finite instrument. How can it comprehend That which is supernal and infinite? How can it grasp that Being which existed before the mind had come into existence? How can the mind go to that Realm, because it did not exist when That alone existed? That is beyond the mind, It transcends the mind; the mind cannot reach That. The mind cannot even think of That. Whenever the mind thinks that it is thinking about That, it is only a thought or an imagination; it is not That. That Being is *achintya*, unthinkable. So the relationship between That and Its creation, including we all, the *jivatma*, cannot be thought about; it is both, oneness, as well as, *bheda,* the difference.

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When a river ultimately merges with the ocean, you cannot distinguish the river from the ocean. There is no more any river, there is only the ocean. But you cannot say that the river water does not exist at all. It is continuously flowing and the river water forms a part of the ocean water, no matter even if it has got mixed up with it. The river water will be different from the water of the ocean at the centre. The river water cannot reach there. So long as the river has lost its separate existence, there is oneness or non-dualism between the river and the ocean. But so long as we cannot completely deny or entirely ignore the existence of the river water, there is *bheda,* a difference, there is duality.'

All these doctrines are having the same origin, the Upanishads or the Jnana-kanda of the Vedas. So all of them are known as Vedanta Doctrines. All these Acharyas were highly learned scholars. Each one of them gave his own interpretation of the Vedanta and proved his system, his view point, to be valid, using arguments, logic and all that. Our great people are so large-hearted that they recognised all these systems to be valid part of our Satya Sanatana Vedic Dharma. All of them are given a place in it and we study all of them. What is the height of generosity is that even Charvaka Doctrine is studied! It is a school of philosophy that does not at all recognise the existence of God. Ours is a great democracy of spiritual thought with complete freedom of speech and expression. The highest spiritual Experience is interpreted by different sages from different points of view, ability and depth. So have come different doctrines.

Veda accepts such divergence by saying; *Ekam Sad-vipra bahudha vadanti.* [There is only one Truth which the scholars describe differently.] It is also said: *Shrutir-vibhinnaa smritayopi vibhinnaa; tathaa muninaam matayo vibhinnaa.* [Vedas are many, other Scriptures are many; so also the views of the sages.] The views of scriptures also vary; there are different views. So also the opinions of sages and saints are different. This is to be expected in human beings as each human being is different. In Hindi it is said: 'All the five fingers are different.' Similarly, the siblings of the same parents are all having different temperaments, different nature. But the parents accept them all. Similarly, all the different doctrines are accepted by the parental Sanatana Dharma. The same one Being is termed differently, viewed differently by the sages.

There is one common Golden Thread in all these various schools of Vedanta. Whatever may be the nature of your relationship with the eternal divine Reality, one thing is certain. And all of them recognise that: *'You are Divine; and you ale inseparably related to the supreme Being*. That is the origin from which you have come; you are of That; and within you there is something of That.' All the Doctrines agree about this; no one disputes this. There is no disagreement; there is no difference of opinion.

This is the most important thing and Gurudev focused hundred per cent on this. This one thing is enough, you need not worry about other things. Let the scholars quarrel and disagree with each other; let them prove one thing and disprove another. You may not bother about all those things if you remember this one thing that *you are Divine*. Beyond

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your passing, temporary, apparent, imperfect human personality which is non-real according to the Vedantic Doctrines, there is hidden within you the unchanging, eternal Reality, Divine Perfection, All-auspiciousness, All-blessedness. It is the Beauty of beauties, incomparable and unimaginable. It is full of light, full of purity, full of everything. It is glorious and grand, radiant and shining. *That is you.* That is your real nature.

Awaken Your Divinity: When you are That, why should you be content in making your life merely a process of petty, little expressions of imperfect qualities of your mind, intellect and all that? When you have the potential, when you have the capacity to become glorious, perfect, pure radiant Being, why do you not opt for That? Why should you remain content at a much lower level? Why should you remain sometimes loving, sometimes hating, sometimes liking, sometimes disliking, sometimes very friendly, sometimes quarreling and fighting? This is foolishness. So our sages say: 'Come! Come! Wake up from this slumber of imperfect life. Awaken yourself to your Divinity. Unfold your Divinity. Attain that All-perfection. Do not opt for anything but the highest and the best. Do all that is necessary to attain your real Nature. Do not compromise.'

That is the ideal of Divine Life. That is the fulfilment of the fundamental discovery of the Truth within as expounded by the Vedanta. The discovery and declaration of the Vedanta about Divinity within you is: 'Within each one of you is the Divinity.' These are the words prompted by Gurudev. This is the declaration coming from the Vedic era. When the ancient sages discovered It, they declared this and they have made a wonderful device to preserve this highest wealth of the humanity, by setting up a system of unbroken succession of a lineage of master and disciple, of *Guru-shishya parampara.*

This invaluable treasure should not be lost. So a disciple should make him fit and worthy of that, so that the wisdom of the scriptures may be imparted to him. He can thus be inspired by the Guru to attain It during this very life. If he chooses ten such worthy disciples and imparts them the wisdom of the scriptures and even if two or even one disciple experiences It, it is enough. Even if we have a single candle lit, we can have from it another, from it another, from it yet another, and the chain continues and the Light will perpetuate perennially. This is the wonderful device of an unbroken lineage of master and disciple. This *Guru-shishya parampara* has succeeded marvellously and most effectively in preserving this great flame of living spirituality from the ancient times till now, so that even now, towards the end of the twentieth century, you are in a position to be told:

"You are Divine. Divinity is your birth-right. Divinity is your true identity. Divinity is your essential, true, unchangeable, eternal, real nature. That is your super, greater and real personality. Human personality is a subordinate personality. You have a dual personality; the Divine and the humane. In spite of all the drawbacks, defects and weaknesses of your human personality, you are still the Pure and Perfect; nothing can touch your this aspect; nothing can alter it. Even though, you are now subject to imperfections of your temporary, passing human personality, you are fully Perfect. Recognise this and

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rejoice. Tell yourself: 'I am always the radiant Divine within. I will not lose a single day, a single chance of trying to bring about the great inner awakening and unfoldment. In this very body, in this very birth, I must succeed in fully awakening my Divinity, experiencing That, becoming established in That.'

> *"That is the Goal, becoming liberated by attaining the full experience of your Divinity. That is the ideal of your life. That is to be attained right now, while living in this body; not in some unknown state after death, after the body is buried or burnt."*

Divinity is Your Birth-right: Is this possible? Yes, certainly. The history of our great country shows that in every generation, there have been such great *jeevan-muktas*, the liberated ones, who say: 'I have attained It. Why don't you attain It? It is your birth-right. You have been given this human birth to attain It, that is the purpose of your life.'

The human birth throws wide open the portal to this blessed state of Divine Consciousness, the Cosmic Consciousness. It is only the human personality which has power to think, reason, reflect, ask, probe, analyse, and discriminate. The very fact that you have been endowed with this rare gift of human personality is sufficient for you to fix the goal of attaining the fullest Blessedness; and that should always be your endeavour.

This is the declaration of the Vedanta: *Uttishthata jaagrata, praapya varaannibodhata.* [Arise! Awake! having reached the great (teachers) attain that Atman. Katha Upanishad 1-3-14.] Become awakened! Approach knowledgeable persons; they are there waiting for you. Come and ask, they are waiting for you to give the highest Knowledge. They expect nothing from you; they have got everything. They are Full and this Fullness spontaneously enriches the whole world; just as the spring season without any reason, spontaneously brings about abundance of flowers and fruits and turns the earth into beautiful greenery, makes all the lives to flourish. The saints are like that spring. So *Jagad-Guru Adi* Sankaracharya says: 'They are there; go to them. Become fully awakened as they have become. Attain Bodhi, the full awakening.'

That is what you are. You are fully awakened but you are in the sleep state and you are dreaming. You are *"Nitya shuddha, nitya Buddha." Buddha* means awakened. This is the eternal call of Vedanta. This is the Vedanta in nutshell for you. You must respond to this great call of Vedanta. You should never forget it. Vedanta is not to be stored in the books and lectures. Vedanta is to be actively lived for awakening. You must respond to the great call *'Uttishthata jaagrata, praapya varaannibodhata'* and say: 'Yes, I shall now wake up and attain Illumination. I am prepared to do anything for It.' This should become inseparable part of very breath of your life, every cell of your life.

Sublimation of Mind

You may open the door. We are keeping the door closed to prevent the monkeys. But when so many people are sitting there is no danger of the monkeys coming inside. Each

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human individual is more than ten monkeys. He has more potential for mischief than that of ten monkeys. Its potential is limited within its little range of instincts and given capacity. There is a humorous saying: *Brahmachari shata-markatah* [A *brahmachari* is equal to a hundred monkeys]. In old days, after being invested with the sacred thread, the boy was known as a *brahmachari* and was sent to a *gurukula.* There were no outlets like radio, television, cinema or sports. So the *brahmacharis* were either studying or making mischief.

What is the nature of mind? It is full of desires and strong compulsive urges. It is very uncontrollable. How much uncontrollable? It is said, it is as much restless, fickle and fidgety as a monkey. You know, the monkey is considered to be the most restless creature. Similarly, the human mind cannot remain steady on one object at a time even for a single moment. It constantly jumps from one object to another like a monkey. But not an ordinary monkey. Suppose a monkey has been drunk and it becomes intoxicated. Now suppose it becomes possessed by a spirit. How much uncontrollable it will now become! As if to add fuel to fire, suppose a scorpion stings this monkey. If a scorpion stings someone, the agony is so unbearable that he will be screaming and shouting, jumping and dancing, holding this thing and that thing. When all these things are added together, can you imagine what will be the plight of this monkey, what will be its antics? They say, the mind filled with desires and without any discrimination is like this monkey.

Can Mind be Controlled?: No wonder, Arjuna expressed his doubt, when Lord Krishna went on describing very nicely, how to control the mind, saying: 'You may go to a lonely place where there is no disturbance, where the environment is good and quiet; in a clean spot, prepare a seat that is neither too high nor too low, made of cloth, a skin and *kusha* grass, one over the other; make the mind one-pointed, with the actions of the mind and the senses controlled, fix the mind on Me and meditate, make the mind steady as a lamp placed in a windless spot which does not flicker...' All this is very nicely described.

But Arjuna had known the havoc his mind had created a little while ago as described in the Chapter I, and here Krishna says: 'You do this thing and that thing and control your mind!' Arjuna says: 'Whatever you have said is good, systematic and scientific. But the only difficulty is it is not just difficult but it is impossible to control the mind.

Chanchalam hi manah Krishna pramaathi balavad dridham;

Tasyaaham nigraham manye vaayoriva sudushkaram.

[The mind verily is restless, turbulent, strong and unyielding, O Krishna! I deem it as difficult to control it as to control the wind. VI-34.'] Mind is more uncontrollable and fickle and difficult to grasp than the blowing wind. Even if we may be able to catch the blowing wind and make it steady, it may not be possible to control the mind. So Arjuna asks Krishna: 'What is the use of describing all this when it is not possible to control the mind?'

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Without contradicting Arjuna, Lord Krishna says:

Asamshayam mahaabaho mano durnigraham chalam;

Abhyaasena tu Kaunteya vairaagyena cha grihyate.

[Undoubtedly, O mighty-armed Arjuna! The mind is difficult to control and restless; but by practice and by dispassion it may be restrained. VI-35] I quite agree with you. The mind is extremely difficult to control. But it is not impossible to control it. It is possible to control the mind."

Everything is done through the mind. Mind is the source of all the problems. The solution always lies where the problem lies. If you have a heart problem the heart is to be treated. If you treat the stomach, the problem can never be solved.

The whole problem of an individual soul engaged in the journey of the earth plane is not outside; it is inside, it is the mind. For example, people who have been born in a family which has been non-vegetarian for generations, for several centuries, are used to that type of food only. Now suddenly, one such fellow, joins a society of strict vegetarians. He tries to stick to the rules of this society. But every time he sees all his people taking non-vegetarian food, there is a problem. His mind urges him: 'What a foolish idea you stick to!' It becomes a temptation that is difficult for him to resist; and there is a tussle in his mind.

On the other hand, think of a person who is born and brought up in a family which is strictly vegetarian for centuries. All the relatives and friends are vegetarians. In his body cell, and hereditarily, there is no inclination, no taste, no temptation towards the non-vegetarian food. On the contrary there is some sort of aversion to non-vegetarian food. For such a person there is absolutely no temptation for that kind of food. Even when he goes to a grand party where good many tasty, choicest delicacies are served, he asks for boiled potatoes, toast and salad only, and he is not the least tempted by the tasty non-vegetarian food.

Suppose, in a family everyone—grandfather, father, mother, elder brothers, are drinking and there always is a bottle on the table. The child daily sees them drinking. When all are away and he is alone, he also drinks out of curiosity. In the beginning he does not like it, but soon becomes addict to it. Now when he grows up, he is always tempted to take a drink whenever he sees a bar or goes to a party where drinks are served or when he is in a company of friends who are addict.

On the other hand a person coming from a family of teetotallers is never tempted by the sight of a bottle or a bar, never enticed by the friends or party. Where is the temptation? Is it in the bottle or the sight of bar or in the friends or the party? Certainly not. All these things have no effect on the second person. The temptation is not outside, it is in the mind only. The vegetarian person or the teetotaller has absolutely no thought in that direction. It is the mental condition of the person which makes all the difference.

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Mind, the Cause of Bondage: In the same way, the bondage, the *Maya,* the *prapancha* is not due to outside objects. You become bound only because you have a craving for this object and because you have attachment or aversion for this person or that, you have likes and dislikes. It is because you give so much importance to the objects and persons that you become bound. If you are not the least affected, influenced or moved by anything, then you will not be caught in the net of *Maya* even while living in the midst of all the worldly objects and persons. So the entire problem is subjective, the bondage of *Maya* or *samsaara* is subjective. The same *samsaara* exists for all; but a child or a sage or a realised soul is not affected by it at all. The problem is within you only.

What is that problem? Why this problem does not arise for a cow or a dog or a bird? Because they do not have a thinking mind. They don't have desires and cravings, ambitions and expectations, schemes and plans for the future. Their problem is confined to a very limited, small area of survival. All that a non-human creature wants is what it can eat, what it can drink, where it can take shelter, how it can protect itself and is interested in satisfying its basic impulses and instincts like procreation. The instinct of fear is put in it, by the Prakriti, the Nature, as a safeguard, so that it will not rush to its own self-destruction. It is because of this fear instinct that the moment a fire starts in a forest, all the animals, birds and even small creatures run for safety, away from the fire, in the opposite direction. This is the Nature's device or mechanism of survival.

Samskaras, the Root-Cause of the Problem: No other being except man has the problem because only man has a thinking mind. He has the ability to interpret a meaning out of every sense perception. Everything a man sees, hears, touches, tastes or smells evokes different kinds of psychological and emotional reaction in the fields of desires and sentiments. Had there been no such reaction, there would not have been any problem. But he does evoke reactions, and the problem begins. A man is in bondage only because there are desires in the mind, because there are cravings in the mind, because there are attachments in the mind, because the mind is never content. The main reason for this is our *samskaras,* the mechanism of impressions of such sense experiences, such sense enjoyments in the past, and the *vasanas,* the propensity to such experiences and enjoyments, and inclination for repeating them in the present and in the future.

Samskaras are the in-built impressions in the mind like the grooves of different sounds on a gramophone record. What is its nature? What happens if you put your thumb on an ink-pad and then press it on a paper? Exactly the same impression has been reproduced and will remain intact even after a thousand years. But it is inert; it does not reproduce by itself more impressions and has no other effect. But the impressions in the mind are different; they are not inert, they are living impressions, they remain alive in the *chitta,* the mind-stuff. They have an effect, they exercise pressure for repeating the experience. They are living impressions and have the potential of generating desires. They create a desire for exactly the same sense experience as one had it previously. There may be *shubha-samskaras* which are good for you or *ashubha-samskaras* which are not good for you.

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When you play a gramophone record it reproduces the song exactly as it was recorded. But it cannot produce the voice that produced it. It only plays back. But what is the nature of the *samskara?* When a particular sense-experience is repeated over a prolonged period, it not only creates a latent dormant tendency and a desire in that direction, but that tendency becomes a *vasana. Vasana* may be *shubha-vasanas* or *ashubha-vasanas,* auspicious and positive or inauspicious and negative.

The *samskaras* are living and dynamic impressions. So when you are put in a similar type of situation, they become active and powerful and you are impelled to go after the same sense experience. They are so circumventing to temptations that they compel you to that experience. They are also called seed impressions as they are like seeds produced by previous experience and are capable to reproduce that experience like a seed producing a tree similar to the one from which it has originated. So long a seed is lying in isolation, in an unfavourable ground, it remains inert. But if you give it a favourable ground beneath the fertile earth and water it regularly, it starts growing; it becomes a little seedling and then comes out a sprout with a few leaves also; and if the favourable circumstances continues it ultimately becomes a big tree similar to that from which that seed was produced. The new tree produces more seeds and every seed has a potential to produce the same type of tree again and again. Such continuous chain reaction is the nature of *samskara.*

The human mind, with its imagination, has potential of completely reproducing the same condition or the psychological state of being. This impels the mind to go and indulge in that sense experience and enjoyment. It is because of these *samskaras* and *vasanas* that a man is propelled towards the sense objects, get attached to them, craves for them, wants to indulge in them, possess them, keep them, snatch them away from others.

The mind has four-fold aspects:

- In the form of reasoning intellect,
- In the form of imagining, remembering and desiring mind,
- In the form of feeling mind having emotions and sentiments,
- In the form of the assertive ego. Once a desire arises, it is the ego principle which asserts: 'I want it, I will obtain it, I will enjoy it, I will do this, I will do that.' It now propels the body into activity. The root cause of all the actions is ego.

All these different modifications of the psychological level of the human nature are totally outward-going and make you a part and parcel of the outward world. So you are enslaved by the desires for the outer objects and forget your own real nature, your own real identity completely. You undergo all sort of emotions, elevation, depression, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, fulfilment, disappointment, etc. All these positive and negative experiences are due to your propelling yourself outside through four aspects of your interior psyche. This has created for you a big range of a net spread by your desires to catch the birds of sense pleasures.

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Dva suparnaa sayujaa sakhaayaa
Samaanam vriksham parishasvajaate;
Tayoranyah pippalam svadvattyan-
Ashnann-anyo abhichaakasheeti.

[Two birds that are ever associated and have similar names, reside on the same tree. Of these, one eats the fruit of divergent tastes, and the other looks on without eating. *Mundaka Upanishad* 3-1-1.] Why the second bird is caught in the net of *karmas* and their fruits? Sankaracharya says, it is due to *avidya-kama-karma-vasana-aashraya-lingopadhi;* it is due to delusion, passion or desire, activities, craving on account of clinging to the adjunct of the body. So you become full of *raga, dvesha, klesha, kalaha,* passion, desire, anger, envy, jealousy, intense craving, dejection, despair, disappointment. One moment you are up, one moment you are down. Now you are constantly in the wide range of outward propelling desires and that keeps you in a state of flux and confusion. This causes the problem.

Be God-oriented: Yesterday we saw that all the things can be directed to that one and only Being, the sole Source. In That only can be obtained, lasting and permanent happiness, unalloyed, unmixed, total happiness, enduring, eternal happiness, happiness that would not decrease or change. That is Brahma, That is God, That is the Kingdom of heaven. Direct your entire being towards That. Direct your mind, intellect, emotions, sentiments towards That, make all your activities God-oriented by spiritualising them.

You may ask: 'All said and done, how can I implement it? Why should I do so? I am involved in this world. All my friends and associations are here. I have attachment for them, all sort of feelings for them. I am fully involved in my surroundings and the situations I face. This is a familiar ground for me. I am born into it and right from my infancy, it is a part and parcel of my life.

So it is spontaneous and natural for my mind, for myself, to move towards them. I had not to learn to do so. I belong to this world and this world is mine; so I naturally flow towards it. It is something most natural, something easiest to do for me. But now you are asking me to reverse that process and connect myself to that unknown Being, whom I do not know, who is absolutely unfamiliar and completely unknown entity for me. How can I ever do it? There is a funny proverb in Tamil: How can I know about the cremation ground until I die myself?

'How I can know That which is all perfect, bliss absolute, absolute unmixed peace and happiness? How can I think about It? How can I meditate upon It? It is easiest for me to think of my mother or father, television or cassette-player, a cricket bat or ball because they are a part of my life. I have not to make any effort or undergo any training to think about them. But I don't know that unknown, unfamiliar Being. How can I have any love or affection,

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inclination or longing for That? How can I relate myself to It? I know my relationship with my brother or sister, mother or father. But how can I be related to That? When I don't know what It is, how can I meditate on It?'

True, your problem is genuine. But the solution is quite simple: *Detach from here, attach There.*

'But how to do it is a big problem. It is quite easy to attach myself here, because everything here is familiar to me. But how to think of That?'

So first of all, you should get yourself familiar, get yourself acquainted, to That whom you want to worship, love, adore, on whom you want to meditate upon, towards whom you want to move.

How you can get yourself thoroughly acquainted with That? There are three different ways. The first is the heredity. If you are born in a family where both the mother and father are devotees and they are doing *puja,* and *kirtan,* singing devotional songs, reading about the *lilas* of the Lord and the lives of saints, talking about Him, you will automatically develop love for Him.

Secondly, if you are not born in such a family, you should think about our rich heritage, you should get yourself acquainted with it by reading the spiritual books. There is a unique tradition in all the parts of India. There are some people whose sole occupation and allocation is to master the scriptures and to go to various places and narrate, expound and elucidate them. Many institutions make elaborate arrangements for such discourses regularly and provide the venue. They go to remote villages also and explain the scriptures in their own, simple, easy way supplementing it with illustrations from day-to-day rural life. This is a part of Indian way of life. So even an illiterate villager also knows some philosophy; he knows about Shabari, Ahalya and many such characters. He knows about *Bhakti*, he knows about God's grace.

Our scriptures are abound in *stotras* and *stutis*, hymns and paeans of the Lord, glorifying Him. Our ancient rishis have not missed, during the narration of the main theme, a single opportunity of introducing *stutis;* so we find them at frequent intervals. We develop great admiration and adoration, great reverence and veneration for the supreme Being. If you listen to the glories, grandeur and greatness of God and the desirability of that wonderful Experience of attaining that Being and attaining the supreme Bliss, Peace and Happiness, and going beyond all sorrow and suffering, it will create in you a longing for God, for that Experience and your life will certainly be changed.

Thirdly, once your taste is developed in this direction due to your family background and upbringing or through listening to the Scriptures, you develop a strong desire to acquire more knowledge and naturally you buy some books. Now the original texts of most of the scriptures are available and they have also been translated in all the Indian languages. So you begin to read and study our great scriptures in your leisure hours, prepare your own personal notes and discuss the finer points with like-minded friends.

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You slowly build up your own library of inspiring literature. What you argued to be unknown and unfamiliar becomes known and so close to your heart that you will spend most of your spare time on That and you don't like to waste your time on the worldly things. Now, you like to read about It, you like to think about It, you like to talk about It and you like the company of people with such tendency only. Now unknown That becomes your best friend and guide, the remote becomes the closest, He becomes a part of your life, you cannot live without Him.

Shravana-Sadhana

In all the paths of Yoga, shravana is considered as a very important *sadhana.* It is listening to the description, to a clear elaborate nature and the glorification of that Being, the transcendental Reality. In *Vedanta Vichara Marga* of *Jnana-Yoga* its importance is clearly accepted. In the Bhakti-sutras of Devarshi Narada and Maharshi Shandilya, a very systematic and scientific method of developing the devotion is outlined; and the very first step is *shravana.* If your temperament is not intellectual, if you are emotional by nature, if you have spontaneous ability to have affection, attachment and love for God, or if you are artistic by temperament, then you are naturally attracted to the *Bhakti-Marga.* You should develop deep and firm attachment towards your deity by the *shravana* of His greatness, grandeur and glories. In addition to whatever has been expounded in the Bhakti-sutras of Devarshi Narada and Maharshi Shandilya, the Maha-Purana of Srimad-Bhagavatam gives us a very systematic and practical method of developing devotion in gradual stages and progressing steadily on the spiritual path. Here also the very first stage is *Shravana.*

In the science of meditation of Raja-Yoga of Maharshi Patanjali, though it has not been specifically stated as a specific *sadhana,* it has been included in another hidden form. The second *anga,* the limb, of the *Ashtanga Yoga* is daily *svadhyaya.* In *svadhyaya, shravana* is more important way to grasp the right understanding. In ancient times, the main method of imbibing knowledge was listening to the teachings of Guru and other great sages. You may study at home, but you may have many doubts or you may not have grasped the proper meaning. So listening to others is necessary. The proper understanding of the scriptures and the basic truths of life is possible only after a complete purification of the mind and the heart, refinement of the intellect and deep faith.

In ancient times, an aspirant was approaching a guru with the request: 'Please elaborate the nature of the Reality to me so that I can meditate on It.' The guru used to say: 'First of all you prepare yourself for that higher knowledge. A gross mind cannot grasp subtle truths. First of all, the mind is to be refined and it is to be made pure and subtle.' Even if these truths are told to an impure mind, it will not retain their impressions. So *chitta-shuddhi,* the purification of the mind-stuff, purification of the interior and sharpening of the discriminating intelligence are the necessary pre-conditions. *Shravana* is of great help in this direction. So *shravana* is the preliminary *sadhana* that prepares

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you for higher *sadhana* and the higher knowledge of Vedanta. Why these preliminary *sadhanas*? If your mind is always filled with grossness and if you have no proper discrimination, it will always go after sense indulgence; and as long as the mind is craving for the sense pleasures, you will not develop a keen discrimination, your intelligence will never be refined. Our ancient *rishis* must have reflected upon this. So our scriptures clearly declare that: 'Have a clean discrimination and Realise it. Free yourself from the deceptive nature of the sense objects, free yourself from the harmful nature of sense indulgence, free yourself from the clutches of your gross nature by constantly exercising discrimination, everyday, every moment of your life.'

You must be a person of great discrimination, intellectual, ethical and spiritual discrimination, so that the material world cannot fool you, cannot trap you. Then only you will be really free and you will be able to imbibe the great wisdom teachings.

Know it well that there is nothing good for you in these sense objects which attract you, entrap you, enslave you. They are the root-cause of all your pain and diseases, sorrow and suffering, disturbance and restlessness. So long the mind is restless, there cannot be real peace or happiness. Whatever intense passion and desire you may have for the sense objects and the sense enjoyments and all that, you gradually get rid of that with firm determination and constant discrimination. You convert your *raga*, passion, for the sense objects into *viraga,* dispassion, and then develop *vairagyam,* detachment. You will have to exercise very strict discipline on your mind.

Because the senses have been habituated with certain behavioural pattern over a long period and you have never tried to curb them, you have never tried to exercise any *samyama,* sense-control due to your delusion and ignorance. You have never come in contact with that type of people, that type of a society, that type of the world that do not run after the sense pleasures, but are trying to curb them. So you think you must have sense enjoyment. Soon you are accustomed to have sense enjoyments. Now it won't leave you unless you make a very determined effort.

Develop that firm determination. You must control the turbulent behaviour of your mind. You must control its constant chasing of the sense pleasure. You must try to restrain yourself. This is one pattern of disciplining your mind.

Sadhan-Chatushtaya

In the ancient times, the *guru* used to tell to a new seeker: 'First of all, practise the four-fold *sadhana* of *viveka, vairagya, shat-sampatti* and *mumukshutva;* and then only, I will give you the knowledge of the subtle truths of philosophy and Vedanta. Otherwise, even if I tell you these subtle truths, you will not be able to understand the correct implications of what I teach you, you will not be able to retain it. This requires purity of the mind and subtle intelligence.' Therefore, first you get yourself established in four-fold *sadhana;* then only you are qualified to do *shravana sadhana* according to the Vedantic *Jnana-Marga.*

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In *sadhan-chatushtaya,* the four-fold *sadhana, viveka* or discrimination is the first aspect, *vairagyam* or dispassion the second.

Shat-sampatti: The third *sadhan* is *Shat-sampatti.* It includes *shama, dama, uparati, titiksha, shraddha* and *samadhana.*

Shama: The determination to subdue these will come only when you realise: 'As long as I allow the senses to push towards the sense objects and allow myself to get caught in the excitement of the sense indulgence, my mind will always be restless, agitated and disturbed, it will be in tumult and it can never be calm or serene. I can never have peace and happiness.' Once the mind realises that this is not the proper direction, it will say: 'No I will not think of the sense objects. The senses naturally plunge in the sense objects, only if I think of them.

The problem arises in *my thinking* of the sense objects. The sense objects are inert and non-intelligent; and so they cannot trouble me by themselves. But I myself allow them to become troublesome; because I do not control my mind, because my mind is full of desires to pursue them, enjoy them, experience them. So long as I have desires for them, my mind dwells upon them. Now I shall not allow it to dwell upon them. I shall divert my mind on to higher things. I shall cultivate different interests, other than mere sense indulgence. In this way, I shall be able to wean my mind away from its habitual propensity of chasing the sense objects and dwelling upon them.'

Now the mind will say; 'Like a lotus remaining unaffected by water even though remaining in the water, I shall remain unaffected even while living in the midst of the sense objects. Even if they come in my gaze I will not look towards them, I will withdraw my attention from the sense objects. First of all I will withdraw the senses from the sense objects; but if in spite of that the objects come into my perception, and if the linking sense is aware of it, I will withdraw my connection with that sense; and if it is too late, I will refuge to identify myself with the sensation that has already been created. Even if an object has come in contact with the sense, the sense sends the message and there is a cognition of the sensation, I will refuse to identify myself with that sensation.

'In this way, I will exercise triple withdrawal: The first and foremost, the most effective and the best, is the withdrawal of sense from the sense object. Secondly, it is the withdrawal of the mind from the sense. If both these fail and the sensation already reaches the mind, I will refuge to identify myself with that, I will not become an enjoyer of it, but will remain merely a pure witness to the happening and will remain absolutely detached and unaffected.'

As the mind begins to practise constantly this inward, invisible, subjective discipline, gradually it becomes free from the influence of the sense objects, free from the outer world of perception; it does not move towards the sense objects but thinks of higher things. And the mind ultimately attains a state of quiescence, absolute serenity. This state of quiescence is called *shama. Shama* is a discipline of establishing a state of serene quiescence in the mind. The mind will no more be restless, agitating or outward-going. Such inner stability must be supported by disciplining the senses, curbing of the senses.

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Dama: Dama is controlling of the tumultuous and extremely uncontrollable activity of the senses. Just as a rider of a chariot exercises a firm grip over the reins and controls the horses, exercising a constant vigil to check them and not allowing them to move in a wayward manner; in the same way, the five horses of the senses are checked and controlled by the awakened intellect endowed with keen, active discrimination. Now it does not allow them to sway and to do what they like. Now you are the master, you give proper directive, you determine the path on which the five horses will have to tread. Now you have the control and you do not allow them to do what they like. This is known as *dama,* the subduing of the senses. This is the first step in the third aspect.

Uparati: This three-fold discipline will bring a complete transformation in your entire nature. The natural tendency of the mind and the entire psyche is centrifugal, it is to propel out and chase the outer objects of attractions and sense pleasures. It moves in all the directions towards thousands of objects and the world is filled with countless objects. The bees are always wandering here and there, never sitting quietly. But if the queen-bee moves to another place, all other bees will abandon their chase and follow it. Similarly, when the mind settles on higher things, all the senses follow the leader and give up their natural tendency to chase the sense objects. If the leader of a political party decides to change the alliance, all the cadre of that party will automatically join that alliance and become a part of it.

Similarly, if the mind carefully observes and analyses the hollowness of the glitter of the attractive objects of this *Maya-bazaar* and of the repeated sense experiences, and starts discriminating and turns away from the sense objects, it will be awakened. It is like joining a new alliance by the leader and the senses will follow it. When the mind becomes established in that state, a peculiar marvellous thing happens: the senses give up their in-born natural propensity to go towards the sense objects of attraction and temptation. The senses which were the main cause of the problem, give up their fundamental nature and the problem automatically ceases to exist. The senses now follow the new nature of the awakened mind, the mind full of discrimination, dispassion and detachment, the mind which is desireless and free from passion. When that happens, it is known as the fourth *sampatti* and is called *uparati.*

Titiksha: The third factor that obsesses and troubles the mind is the unpleasant experiences which upset you immediately. Too much of heat or cold, some little discomfort or inconvenience upsets you easily. Be a Spartan and develop a habit of bearing these without being upset. Don't leave all your work to correct them and to restore that comfort immediately. Don't allow it to distract you from your work, from your path. As the saying goes; Grin and bear it. This is called *titiksha.* It means to bear the little discomforts and inconveniences, troubles and unpleasant experiences, little ups and downs, which are part and parcel of everyday life. If you go on being upset by them and try to correct the situation, your time and energy will be wasted and your psyche will be affected. You should bear them and ignore them unless they are of a very dangerous nature.

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Shraddha: *Samadhana* is possible only if you have absolute faith in whatever ideal you may have chosen. You should convince yourself: I know I have chosen the right path. Many have treaded this path and attained the supreme Being. They say this is the greatest Experience. They cannot be wrong. They had no personal axe to grind. They had no thread attached to it. They have nothing to gain or lose whether we adopt it or not. They did not want us to suffer. They wanted us to attain our highest welfare. They were our well-wishers, they have motiveless goodwill for us. It will be foolish for me not to have complete faith in them. So I have total faith. This is the sixth *sampatti* known as *shraddha.*

Samadhana: When one is well established in that state, he resolves: 'That and That alone is my goal. One-pointedness will be my state. I will not be attracted by anything other than That. There will never be any lack of self-control. I will never allow my aspiration to tone down even a little. I will not stop till the great goal is attained.'

Now your daily routine is totally changed. You are no more interested in petty things; you are no more wasting your time and energy after them. All your energy is fully directed in the inner direction, towards your goal that you have accepted. This is the fifth *sampatti* called *samadhana,* giving oneself entirely to a single ideal that you have adopted.

Mumukshutva: The fourth *sadhana* is *mumukshutva*, a strong desire of final emancipation. If all the things described above are to be kept up at the same pitch of intensity, you must have a very keen and intense longing for attaining Liberation. If you become a little slack, if you allow your effort to be diluted a little, finished. You may fall back to the square one.

What a great thing, great fortune it was to become one of the twelve disciples of Lord Jesus Christ! But one of them was tempted a little by the glitter of the gold and betrayed his Master. This is symbolic. Even after reaching such a very high state, if you allow your keen, intense involvement in that state to be diluted a little, finished. Therefore, intense longing for the goal is necessary.

Jeevo Brahmaiva An-Aparah

Sri Jagadguru, Bhagavadpada, Adi Sankaracharya is one of the greatest philosophers India has produced in its long chain of great philosophers. He is also regarded as one of the greatest philosophers of the world by good many philosophers and thinkers of the whole world. He was a giant intellectual personality and no one has equalled him till now on the scene of philosophical literature of the world. His contribution is simply amazing. He is regarded as a phenomenon.

In a brief life span of thirty-two years, he has brought out voluminous philosophical, spiritual and devotional literature of such high standard that it has set for ever the norms for classical spiritual literature for the entire world.

For a long time his literature was confined to India only. But its richness, the towering pinnacle of its conclusions, sheer strength of its logic, its crystal clear rationality are so

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remarkable and irrefutable that once some German scholars read him, they immediately started translating his works into German language and soon his works attracted the attention of the European scholars. The German translations were soon translated into other European languages.

Maharshi Veda-Vyasa gave us the quintessence of the Upanishadic philosophy in Vedanta-Sutra which is also known as Brahmasutra and he was indirectly responsible for bringing to us the great spiritual discourse of Lord Krishna to Arjuna. This *jnanopadesha* is known as Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita. It covers all the aspects of spiritual life. As it is woven in the great epic Mahabharata written by Maharshi Vyasa, he is indirectly responsible for bringing to us the divine preaching of Bhagavan. He also gave to the world the elaborate and very much voluminous eighteen Puranas. After giving to the world such unthinkably vast literature, he has said something very peculiar, very extraordinary, towards the end of his life: 'I have brought out this Puranic literature with the welfare of the mankind at my heart. In all this voluminous literature I have brought, I have told you what is meritorious to human activity and what will lead you to your greatest good and also the opposite of it, what is demeritorious or what you should always avoid, because it leads to your greatest harm, to greatest sorrow. I will sum this up in half a verse:

Ashtaadasha-Puraneshu Vyasasya vachana-dvayam;

Paropakaaraaya punyaaya paapaaya para-peedanam.'

[Vyasa has to say only two things (as quintessence) of the eighteen Puranas: *to do good to others is worthy, to harm others is unworthy*]. To harm, harass or injure others, or to inflict pain on others, to cause sorrow to others, is the greatest demerit and one has to suffer for that. If you make your God-given gift of the human life in being good to others, utilise it in doing good to others, in benefiting life around you, to help all creatures, that will lead to your own highest good. It will result in your own happiness, in your own supreme welfare.

Jagadguru Sankaracharya, this towering philosopher has given the quintessence of his colossal, towering philosophical literature in a similar way. At the end of his career he says: 'Look here! Listen! All that I have written about, all that I have commented upon, I sum up in half-a-verse:

Shloka-ardhena pravakshyaami yad-uktam grantha-kotibhih;

Brahma Satyam jagan-mithyaa jeevo Brahmaiva an-aparah.

[In half-a-verse I shall express what has been said in crores of books: Brahma alone is real, the world is *mithyaa;* the Soul is Brahma and no other.] The Reality alone is. The Supreme Existence is eternal, non-dual and without a second. *You are That only.* Everything perceived through the five senses and understood by your mind and intellect is unreal. All the objects of the world are like the water of a desert mirage, they are like the glint of the nacre, the mother pearl lying on the sand of seashore and appearing like silver,

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shuktikaa hi rajatavad-avabhasate. They have no real existence but they have only seeming appearance and that too temporary.

What appears in a dream as cent per cent true, true beyond doubt so long as you remain in the dream state, disappears in a fraction of a second once you come to the waking state. Similarly, this world disappears once you are awakened. The dream experience is so graphic and so complete in all respects, and you perceive every detail, and you experience it through all the five sense-organs, that experience dominates your consciousness completely and during that period that experience remains the only truth for you.

But when you wake up suddenly due to the ringing of the alarm-clock or any such disturbance, the very next moment everything disappears, everything becomes unreal! You cannot say that your dream was non-existence or unreal because you remember it in full details; yet you cannot say it is real because you cannot photograph it, print it, or you cannot reproduce the conversation and the scene or the objects and the characters in any other way. Nevertheless, one part of your consciousness retains its memory and you can write it down or narrate it. But now it is non-existent. The moment you wake up, it becomes non-existent and irrelevant. Now your consciousness is dominated by some other events of some other reality which takes over the charge of your consciousness.

Our seers say, it is just like that. You are a part of this dream experience, this dream world, and you think that it is real, your outer personality is real. But when you wake up to the supreme, cosmic Reality, your true identity, then only you know that your false identity was as much a figment of that dream as the characters and all the factors of that dream world. You thought, you knew yourself as Mr. So and So, you conceived your identity with a certain name and form; but when you wake up, when you attain the *Bodhi,* the Enlightenment, the Illumination, that very second you yourself become Light only, your false identity disappears completely, like the disappearance of darkness as soon as you put on the light. You may wonder: How could I cling to the darkness all along! Why was I thinking like that? What a foolish way of thinking!

Sankaracharya does not stop at that. He asserts that your present personality is false; because you are no other than that supreme, wonderful Being. You are one with It. In a most wondrous way he is able to tell us graphically how it is so, so that, with a little common sense one can easily understand it and it becomes absolutely clear and beyond doubt. The world we see and we know with all our sense perception is not real and non-eternal. It is there for a moment and ceases to exist the next moment. It is your delusion to think that you are a weak and imperfect, limited being confined to this physical body and the name and form associated with it. Remember! *You are no other than That, you are the Brahma-tattva only.* You are the cosmic Being, you are the Perfect, Divine, Universal Being. You are no other than That.

How is it possible? It is *svatah-siddhah,* self-evident. Because Brahma is *ekameva-advitiyam,* the one and the only Existence, without a second. There is no second. So your Soul is no other but That only.

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Our seers have proved this in an amazing way, so that an ordinary man can also easily understand. In an ocean, there are innumerable waves; some small, some big, some very big, some giant size. They are of different shapes and sizes. You can see them, you can observe them dancing and playing. You can distinguish them, identify them. You can photograph them. You can hear them roaring. There are innumerable waves with different shapes, characteristics and different life spans. Each wave has its own separate identity, its own existence. Even when you are watching at these waves with different individual shapes, sizes and characteristics, what you are looking at? Do you see anything other than the ocean?

What is the origin of these waves? From where they have all emerged? Do they really have separate individuality? How the seeming individual existence of these waves was possible? When they broke away, where they went? Each wave arose from the ocean. It owed its existence to the ocean. When it momentarily existed as a seemingly separate identity, it was always supported by the ocean and always remained a part of the ocean. It never had an existence independent of the ocean. When it subsided, it merged back into the ocean only. Thus, ocean is its *aadi, madhya* and *anta,* the beginning, the middle and the end; that is, it emerges from the ocean, its existence is possible with the support of the ocean only, and when it subsides it merges back into the ocean and once again becomes one with the ocean. Even when it momentarily looked something distinct from the ocean with a separate individual identity, it was at no moment other than the ocean itself.

What is the implication of this? Like the wave being ever no other than the ocean, the individual soul is never other than That. The ocean is the only real existence; the apparent multiplicity in the form of waves has no ultimate reality. No other thing besides the ocean ever exists.

There is such a large variety of clothes with different colours and different designs. But beyond all these forms, what exists is only cotton *tattva;* nothing exists there other than cotton. If you go to a big pottery store, you find hundreds of different articles of different sizes and different names and different forms. Even when you are seeing these variegated types of pottery articles—delicate, big, small, artistic, decorative, utilitarian—you are looking at one thing only, the clay. All the pottery is made out of clay only. You may give different names to pots, but they are nothing other than clay. There are different ornaments, but a goldsmith sees nothing other than gold.

These are some of the classical analogies given by our ancient sages, in order to bring home the non-duality of *Brahma-Tattva*, in spite of so many variegated manifestations of that *Tattva* in different names and forms. There is only one Existence, beyond all these multifarious names and forms. While explaining this to a Vedanta student, the teacher does not elaborate, but simply says: *Ghata-pata-adi nyaayavat. Ghata* means pot and *pata* means cloth. So it means, like the analogies of pot, cloth, etceteras, there exists only one *Tattva,* even though seemingly there are so many, and are seen as many.

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Some people give another analogy: A spider decides to make a home for itself in a corner of a room. If we have to build a home for us, we have to buy so many different things—bricks, cement, iron rods, various items of hardware and sanitary-ware—from so many different shops. A bird builds a nest as its temporary abode. It goes here and there and collects so many things from various places. From how many sources the spider has to obtain all the materials? What are the materials? It does not go anywhere to collect the materials. Whatever is necessary to make a web, it brings out of its own self and remains in that web; and when its purpose is served, it absorbs the web back into its own self. Can you ever say that the web is different and separate from the spider? In spite of there being seemingly two different things, the spider and the web, there is non-duality. The web is no other than the spider.

What is the purpose of the various philosophical systems and vast spiritual literature? Why do they exist? They exist to tell us certain home-truths. Why should they tell us these home-truths? What is the value of these home-truths? Because if you are not aware of these truths, you will be living in delusion, you will be deceiving yourself. You can live in wisdom only if you are fully aware of these truths; you will then no longer remain in delusion.

The second important, pragmatic necessity of knowing the truths is: The eternal quest of the entire mankind in the whole universe is: How to overcome pain and sorrow and obtain lasting happiness? Our scriptures have summed up the answer to this in an amazing manner. All the people are in quest of so many things. A farmer is engaged in trying to get a proper field, proper manure and fertilisers, proper seeds, proper pair of bullocks, proper equipment, water for irrigation, this and that—hundreds of different things. Similarly, people in other occupations are also trying to find so many things. But the scriptures say: 'Ultimately, all are engaged in search of one thing only. That one thing is happiness. No one wants pain, sorrow, grief or suffering. Everyone wants to avoid unpleasant, undesirable, painful experiences. All want happiness and they want to perpetuate that experience of happiness. *Sukham bhuyaad, maa bhuyaad duhkham.* Avoiding sorrow and suffering and trying to obtain happiness.' This is the eternal quest of mankind in all the parts of the world. This sums up in nutshell, the eternal quest of the man on this earth. We may do it in so many different ways, but our objective is the same.

If you know certain truths of human life and base your life and conduct on them only, you will be able to get rid of sorrow, suffering and pain, and obtain real happiness. Real happiness is not momentary but permanent. If you do not base your life on these truths, your quest will be a leap in the dark, a wild-goose-chase. You cannot get permanent happiness from those things which are themselves temporary. And everything in this world is temporary. So, the worldly things cannot give you happiness. Therefore, you should not crave for anything in this world; you should not go after anything in this world; you should not allow yourself to get enslaved by the temporary objects of this world.

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Everything in this world is temporary; there is not a single thing which is permanent. What are the adjectives used by Lord Krishna for this world? *Anityam, asukham, ashashvata,* impermanent, unhappy, non-eternal—these are the adjectives with which the Lord refers to His own creation, His own work. Our experience teaches us that even while some happiness seems to be present sometimes, it is not eternal, it is for a short duration only; and you cannot rely on it because that experience of happiness is always changing. One moment it is there, the next moment, before you can grasp it, it disappears or diminishes.

Why do you crave for it? Your imagination of a thing may be something and you may think: 'I will be happy if I get it.' But when you get it you find it to be totally different from what you had imagined. Now you want to get rid of it! You are imagining something, but the actuality is something else. And even if the actuality tallies and coincides with your imagination, it goes on changing while you have it.

Here is a simple analogy. You want to enjoy your Sunday with an ice-cream party. The carry-home service delivers you the best quality ice-cream. It is served in beautiful bowls to each member of the family. It is decorated with cherry and special cream. Everything is ready. But the telephone call comes and you have to attend it. It is some urgent and serious matter. You ask other people to take the ice-cream and you continue to talk on the phone for twenty minutes. When you come to the party again, where is your beautifully decorated ice-cream? It is no longer what it was. It is neither cold nor does it stand, it has already dissolved. So also, all the things in this world are changing. Even the most beautiful or the nicest thing will also become worthless.

Suppose, you have brought the best quality alphanso mangoes. As soon as you enter your home, there is a phone call from your boss. He wants you to rush immediately to some place for a few days on some urgent important work. You leave home in a hurry, forgetting to tell your wife about the mangoes. When you come back home and remember about the mangoes and open the packet, what you find is that all the mangoes are spoilt and some juice is coming out of it. You had expected the fruits to give a great joy; but now you have to do the cleaning and throw them away. Is there any intrinsic lasting value in the mangoes? All the objects of this world are non-eternal and yet we are always clinging to them!

Suppose, a boy meets a very beautiful girl. He is so much enchanted and enamoured that he thinks he will never be happy unless he marries that girl. They got married. After some time, the girl is severely infected by small-pox and it makes her very ugly. The love of the boy changes completely. He says; 'Where is that beautiful girl whom I had married. She is not that beautiful dream-princess of mine.' So Gurudev says, what attracts the mind is the outer physical beauty.

Suppose, you like *khir* very much. You are invited by your bosom friend for a party on some festival day and the menu includes *khir.* Its preparation is most delicious. You eat beyond your capacity. Now your friend fondly insists for a couple of helpings more

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and you take some more *khir*. Now it is the turn of his wife. You cannot say no and the *khir* causes you discomfort and nausea. The same *khir* which you like very much is now the cause of all the trouble. Where has gone that pleasure-giving power of the *khir?* If it has in itself an intrinsic power to give you happiness, your happiness should increase more, the more you take it. But on the contrary it causes you discomfort. That means the experience of happiness is subjective and is not in the outside object; the object has no inherent quality to make a man happy.

All these analogies bring out one common truth: There is no happiness in the objects of the world. They are the cause of pain. Lord Krishna says:

Ye hi samsparshajaa bhogaa duhkhayonaya eva te;

Aadyantavantah Kaunteya an teshu ramate budhah.

[The enjoyments that are born of contacts are only generators of pain, for they have a beginning and an end, O Arjuna! The wise do not rejoice in them. B.G. V-22]

The first home truth is: All want happiness. Why do you then chase those outside objects which have no intrinsic capacity to give you happiness? If you want happiness, make effort in the right direction. Time fleets away. You are here for a limited period only. The rare chance of human birth is not endless. Therefore, be up and doing. If you seek happiness, exert yourself in the right direction.

What is the wrong direction? The world is the wrong direction; anything and everything in this world is the wrong direction. There is not even an iota of happiness in the objects of this world and they can never make you happy. This creation of Brahma has some utilitarian value; but it has a nuisance value as well. It can never give you happiness.

The second home truth is: The real Happiness is in That All-perfect, non-dual *Brahma-tattva,* One without a second. All the objects of the world are merely generators of pain, sorrow and suffering. Therefore, don't waste this precious opportunity by running in the wrong direction and ultimately getting caught in disappointment, frustration, sorrow and lamentation.

Which is the direction that you should follow? You need not study deeply the scriptures and big volumes of philosophy to learn this. Many saints, mystics and spiritual seekers have treaded the right path and reached their destination and attained That. They implicitly followed the right direction, obtained that experience and obtained the Happiness. Whoever has followed them had also the same wondrous Experience. Make a deep study of their lives and try to follow their footsteps. A poet says:

The lives of great men oft remind us

That we can make our lives sublime.

We should emulate the lives of the mystics and saints who have attained That; we should follow their footsteps. They were people who lived a very austere life, they were men of *vichara* and *viveka;* they never led a haphazard life.

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Therefore, always do *vichara* and have *viveka,* enquire and discriminate every moment, every step, every breath of your life. Let there always be active discrimination and enquiry within you. You have not to worry now, because you will not miss your step and go in the wrong direction.

The third home truth is: It is the lives of the saints that teach us in what direction we should go, how to lead our lives and what practices to engage in, so as to attain the highest state of supreme Blessedness and Bliss, of eternal Happiness beyond sorrow and suffering. *Mahajanah gataah sa panthah.* That is the path which the great ones have trodden. That is your path. That is the path you should follow.

When they attained the supreme state of Blessedness and Bliss, they found that That Blessedness and Bliss was no other than the eternal *ekameva-advitiyam Brahma-Tattva.* The very nature of that Supreme Reality is the quintessence of one hundred per cent, unalloyed, pure, total Bliss. So they declared: *Anando Brahmeti vyajanaat.* [He knew Bliss as Brahma. Tait. Up. 3-6-1.]

Therefore, strive by all the means possible, through thought, word and deed, through whatever action you may engage yourself, to connect yourself to that supreme Reality. Because from that with which you connect yourself, its nature will flow into you. This electric bulb is connected with the electricity and so it gives you the light. But if you cut off this connection by switching it off, there will be darkness; because now the nature of the electricity is not flowing into the bulb. So, why don't you connect yourself with That which is Light of lights, which is Bliss-absolute, Peace-absolute, which is eternal Happiness? *Teshaam shantih shaashvati netareshaam.* [To them belongs the eternal Peace, not to others. Katha. Up. 2-2-13.] So connect yourself with It. Link yourself with That. That is the essence of all the *sadhana,* all the philosophy. Establish contact with that supreme, transcendental Reality. Make a permanent inner link-up with That and go on striving for It by every means possible and move in the direction leading to It. Go on increasing that relation by leaps and bounds and make your progress in geometric progression. Have full faith and you will reach That.

That is the essence of all Vedanta, essence of all Yoga, essence of the *sadhana.* Connect yourself with That, sustain that connection and move towards That more and more. Intensify your relationship with It. Make it more intense, and more and more intense. That is the purpose of all *upasana,* that is the purpose of *japa,* that is the purpose of all *kirtan,* that is the meaning of *aaraadhanaa,* that is the meaning of meditation. All these are the means or processes of building up and consolidating that relationship, the spiritual link-up with the Divine. All these are to move progressively towards the supreme Reality, till you ultimately attain Oneness with That.

When a small stream comes out of a glacier of a snow-clad mountain, it is so narrow that you can jump over it and go to the other side. But slowly more streams join it, and its flow goes on increasing. It becomes a small river. Some other rivers join it, and it becomes a big river. There is so much water! But it goes on to its chosen path to meet

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the ocean non-stop, continuously, untiringly. If there is some obstacle in the form of a rock or hill, it remains undeterred and finds its right path again. Ultimately, it does meet the ocean and becomes one with it. That is the success of its life-long effort. That is the fulfilment of its life. Your life should flow like that continually on the same one path, progressively coming nearer and nearer towards that supreme Being. Stop not till the Goal is reached. This is the call of Upanishad: *Uttishthata jaagrata, praapya varaannibodhata.* [Arise! Awake! Having reached the great (teachers) attain that Atman. Katha Upanishad 1-3-14.]

This is the quintessence of all the philosophy—eastern, western, ancient or modern. All the philosophies exist to tell you that the greatest Bliss is in That, the One, non-dual; and not in the many fleeting appearances. It also tells us that this human birth is a rare opportunity and so you should not postpone your march towards the Goal, you should not waste a single moment. Be up and doing. Stop not till the Goal is reached.

All the scriptures, all the philosophies exist only in order to liberate mankind from the web of sorrow in which he is caught, and to take him beyond all sorrow, pain and suffering; and to make him attain and become established forever in the state of supreme Bliss, Perfection, Blessedness and Liberation.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

(At the end of the discourse a student asked: "Is it possible to attain such a state in this very life?"

Sri Swamiji assured, *"Emphatically yes. It is possible, one hundred per cent."*)

Objective of Yoga-Vedanta

You are the students of the twenty-fourth Yoga-Vedanta course of the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy of this spiritual, Dharmic and ethical institution founded by Guru Maharaj Sri Swami Sivanandaji sixty years ago. First, you should acquaint yourself with what you are engaged in.

The first objective of this course is: You want to know something about the Indian culture, about Yoga, Vedanta, meditation and about the Indian scriptures like the Gita, Upanishads, Bhagavatam, Ramayana. That is, you want to fulfil your *jijnasa,* your thirst for knowledge.

Secondly, in some of you there may be an urge: 'I am born in India. If I don't know anything about the Indian culture, I am an Indian in name only. If I have to become a true Indian, representing my culture I must absorb and assimilate the Indian culture so that I may live according to the ideals of our culture and these ideals may manifest in me. Then only, I can become a true Bharatiya.'

In addition to these, in some of you there may be a still higher third dimension of spiritual longing, the spiritual *jijnasa, mumukshutva,* a spiritual hankering: 'This course

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may help me to become a spiritual person. It may help me to put me on the path of spiritual seeking and spiritual progress. It may help me to move towards God.'

All these three objectives can be achieved here, if you live here not only as students but also as persons seeking spiritual unfoldment of your personality, if your approach is: 'I want to move ahead in the life, I want to make progress not only in the dimension of intellectual knowledge, not only as a lover of Indian culture, but also in the dimension of my spiritual Reality.' We are not merely human beings. This personality, this identity is merely a temporarily added token identity. You were not having this human body before you came to this earth plane, before you were born to your parents. You did not have a human name and form, a human personality or even the human consciousness. In that state you were something else; what it is you do not know.

If you think deeply about the life, you also realise that this temporary human personality shall end one day. One day you will have to discard this human identity.

The whole of our religious thought originates from a mass of Knowledge and Wisdom. It does not originate from any specific single, divinely inspired outstanding personality like Buddha, Mahavir, Zoroaster, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed or Guru Nanak. There is no such personality behind the Satya Sanatana Vaidika Dharma. It is timeless. It is so ancient that its beginning is not known to anyone. The end portion of the Vedas, known as Upanishads, is the treasure of the mass of knowledge, wisdom arising out of the highest supernal Experience. The earlier portions of the Vedas may be still more ancient which goes beyond the recorded human history. This is the only non-prophetic religion in the world.

There were some ancient civilisations like the Assyrian civilisation, the Egyptian civilization, the Greek civilization, etc. Whatever way of worship and living they were having, were dubbed by the occidental scholars by the common label of paganism. Those scholars thought that the Hindus were superstitious and they always criticised them. But when they came to discover the towering heights of the philosophical wisdom that we have attained, they were bewildered, they were stunned. They started looking at our religion with reverence. Their scholars started studying the Vedas. One of the first people to study the Indian scriptures were the Germans. They found in the Vedic wisdom profound depth. A great scholar Max Mueller translated the Vedas in the German language. The English translations are from the German translations of Max Mueller, Paul Deussen, Schopenhauer and other outstanding German philosophers who studied the Indian philosophy. Schopenhauer was so much inspired by the Upanishads that he said: "Upanishads have been the solace of my life and I know that they will be solace of my death also."

The quintessence of all the Vedas is in the end portion, the *summa cum laude,* the epitome is the Upanishads; and the essence of Upanishads is the Bhagavad Gita. Bhagavad Gita starts by telling this terrible truth: *Jaatasya hi dhruvo mrityuh* [Certain is death for the born. II-27]. For everyone born, departure from here is a certainty. If you have

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come here, you have to go one day leaving everything here. Therefore, whatever we have to achieve, we have to achieve in this life itself. Also, it makes it very clear that we did not have a human personality before we were born and we will not have this human personality when we depart from here. When you go beyond, you will have no name, no form, no body and no human personality.

What is that state? A state transcending the name and form where the human identity is dropped, it is reduced to ashes or buried. That is a state where you do not have this time consciousness of seconds, minutes and hours, days, months and years. You go beyond all that. There, there is no sunrise for you nor any sunset. In that state, you are a centre of spiritual consciousness. That is called Atman and It is a part of the cosmic, spiritual, universal Soul. That is your real identity. You are an *amsha,* a part of the supreme Being.

It is important, therefore, that you try to become aware of your real identity, try to become aware of your inner centre, your inner Being. From that awareness only, you can unfold your Divine Identity. God is Divine; and you are a part of that Divine Being. So you are also Divine. Divinity is your essential Reality. It has neither birth nor death, It has neither name nor form, It has neither time nor space, It has neither pain nor suffering, It has neither grief nor sorrow, It has neither bondage nor liberation. It is beyond all these. It is a state of peace and joy. It is a state of bliss. There is no other experience; there is no weeping and wailing, no fighting and quarrelling. All these pertain to your physical and psychological levels. All the experiences on this earth plane are either physical or psychological. But the Spirit is beyond physical and psychological levels. It is far above and physical and psychological experiences cannot reach It. It is a state which is devoid of the entire range of earth experiences of human beings. It is beyond them, It transcends them.

In that dimension, you are *Sat, Chit, Ananda*. You are the luminous Consciousness. You are the Existence and you are conscious of your Existence. That state of Being is pure Bliss, It is pure Peace and Joy. You are free and fearless.

That is to be realised. That is to be known. That is to be contemplated. That is to be experienced. That is the Goal of your life. That is the greatest ideal of real India, the spiritual India and has remained so for thousands of years, year after year. No matter what upheavals were there on the surface of India, this living stream of spirituality, the living stream *of Atma-sakhshatkara* and *aparoksha-anubhuti,* of Self-realisation and direct Experience has been flowing continuously as a silent, unseen, inner current.

You are entering the spiritual life to participate in that Experience. Apply your common sense and enquire: 'I was not a human individual before I was born. When I will have to leave this body I will be no more having this human personality. Then who am I?' Soon you will be convinced in what our seers have said: 'You are not this body, nor this mind. You are the immortal Atman. You are the shining centre of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, you are the shining centre of peace and joy. You are full of purity,

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full of love, full of compassion, full of harmony, full of unity, full of light. You are *Jyotishaam-api taj-jyotih*, [That, the Light of the lights. B.G. 13/18].'

You should learn this. You must start reflecting upon your real identity. You should try to do *vichara* and *viveka;* if out of *viveka* and *vichara,* little spiritual consciousness is awakened and unfolded within you then your attending the course is really fruitful, it is worthwhile. Otherwise, you will be going back, taking with you some bookish knowledge only. No doubt you will enrich yourself and you will be a better individual. But the real purpose of Guru Maharaj in starting the Academy was not only to equip you with some knowledge of Indian philosophy, religion, scriptures, culture and all that, but also to awaken your inner spiritual consciousness out of slumber.

Yoga and Vedanta are the two terms which imply the highest Experience, the Divine Experience, the God Experience which our ancient Vedic sages, seers and *siddha mahapurushas* had experienced. That Experience is Vedanta. Vedanta is the actual Experience of your true identity; it is not merely knowledge at intellectual level. Yoga is studying and practising the scientific methods, step by step, to attain ultimately, that Divine Experience. So Yoga and Vedanta cannot be separated. They are inter-connected. The objective of Yoga is to give you the highest Vedantic Experience and in doing this, Yoga takes the totality of human personality.

Yoga tries to achieve that Experience through various paths. Through the Bhakti-Yoga, that is through the emotional path of your being, your *bhava,* sentiment, emotion, through prayer, faith, devotion and worship. Through the Raja Yoga or Dhyana Yoga with the power of your mind; by the withdrawal of the mind, making it turned inward, controlling and overcoming its restlessness and making it still, concentrating it and meditating to pierce the veil of ignorance and attaining Illumination. Through the intellectual part of your being in Jnana Marga or Vichara Marga, through *vichara, viveka,* reflection, analysis and investigation. Through the Karma Yoga by dedicating all your daily activities to God.

All these four paths can be combined into a single spiritual process, because the ultimate objective of all of them is the same. Our seers say: 'Make use of all the faculties God has given you as a part of your human personality and direct them towards the attainment of *Brahma-Jnana.*'

Yoga is a systematic way of trying to rise into the spiritual Consciousness by a well-regulated series of progressive steps. Vedanta is the ultimate Experience and Yoga is the method to attain It. So you have to learn both and make use of this knowledge and practices to bring about gradually the ascent of the spirit. It is possible provided you have the proper understanding and you are seriously practising them.

You can make use of all the four faculties by using all the four main paths—Karma, Bhakti, Dhyana and Jnana—in order to have the Vedantic Realisation. This you must bear in mind. Though you have come here as students and after going back you will be

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living your daily life in your own way. But even if you continue to live your life as you were living previously, the life should not be the same. Now your life is supported by knowledge and wisdom which you have acquired here. Your life may remain the same outwardly, but it will not be the same. You have a better vision, a more clear perception, you will have a fuller wisdom about your mission in life.

The quality of your life will now suddenly become transformed. It will be much superior life, much purposeful life. Your life will be ever ascending on the spiritual path. May be you will come again and again to the Ashram for the spiritual atmosphere. Life is short, time is fleeting. The human life is a very valuable, very precious gift of God. You should utilise it properly and try to attain something. Always remember what is That which is to be attained.

First and foremost, you must know how to become an ideal human individual. All the positive as well as the negative qualities are within us; many weaknesses as well as favourable qualities are within us. Whatever is not good, whatever is negative, whatever is imperfect must be eliminated gradually, so that you can shine with all that is positive and virtuous, so that you can become an ideal human individual. You will move forward continuously. Many people will be benefited by your good nature.

Secondly, our ancient ideal is to do maximum good to maximum number of people to the extent you can, in as many ways as you can, as long as you can, in all the circumstances, in all the places. Constantly make yourself a centre of *'being good and doing good.'* This body is given to you for doing good to others. The fellow human beings, animals, plants, the whole world must be benefited through your life. This is an integrated way of life. It is known as *paropakara.* We should live in such a way that we become of some use to God's creation, to all life around us.

Thirdly, your human personality is temporary. You have come here to know your real Self, to know your spiritual nature. Make use of this human birth in such a way that you can leave this body shining with Wisdom, shining with the Light of that great Experience, the Self-realisation.

These three should be your ideals:

- On the subjective level, to become an ideal human being. Make use of all your knowledge to reform yourself, so that you will have the satisfaction that you have not wasted this gift of God.
- On the outer level, to become a great *paropakari*, a benefactor of all life with utmost humility, without slightest egoism.
- On the inner level, to attain spiritual Realisation. The first two ideals are pertaining to this world; but you do not belong to this world, you belong to a higher spiritual dimension.

These three are the great tasks of human life. So, become an ideal human being. Secondly, become a centre of good to the whole world around you. While leading ideal

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human life, while doing maximum good to life around you as a *maha-paropakari.* You practise a rich inner spiritual life of prayer, *japa, swadhyaya,* meditation. But all these you have to do silently, secretly, in your private life. No one should know about it, do not make propaganda of it and continue to live your life as before. This inner secret transformation should be known only to God. Suppose, you have kept in your bag some iron thing and a *siddha* turns it into gold by touching *parasmani* to it. Only you know there is an immense treasure inside but others do not know. You are careful not to tell about your treasure to anyone so as to guard it. Like that, as far as possible, never divulge your spiritual practices, your spiritual treasure to anyone. Then only, you will get maximum benefit out of it.

This is the objective of the Yoga-Vedanta Course: To help to become an ideal human individual; to transform your life with the noble ideal of *paropakara*; and with the knowledge of Yoga and Vedanta becoming a spiritual seeker, *jijnasu* and thus making your life a continuous progress towards connecting yourself with the supreme Being, a continuous spiritual ascent towards Him.

Detach, Attach

Radiant immortal Atman! Beloved children of the Divine! Immortal souls, temporarily in a state of physical embodiment and for a brief duration engaged in living with a material, physical, gross outer world, made up of ever changing, temporary perishable names and forms!

This episodic presence of yours upon this ever-changing, momentary, perishable earth plane of apparent things with names and forms is characterised by a beginning and an end. These are indisputable and incontrovertible truths regarding our presence here that it is a relationship with changeful things, perishable things, momentary in time and space, imperfect because they are not capable of imparting to you the same experience permanently. They are capable of giving you both enjoyable or painful feeling. But they cannot give you a uniform positive experience of happiness or satisfaction. You will not find it here, because of the nature of objets in this world is temporary; and temporary objects cannot give you a lasting experience.

Your life here on this earth plane is a great sojourn or a journey and you are only a traveller. You do not belong to this world. This world is not your real abode. Kabir addresses the human individual as musafir, as a traveller in this famous poem:

Utha jaga musafir bhor bhee

Aba raina kahan jo sovat hai;

[O sojourner! Awake! The dawn awaits you. There is no darkness now; why are you (still) asleep?] In another poem he says this earth plane is a halting place for a night for the caravan of life; this is not the permanent abode. People spend a night together, get themselves little aquatinted with one another, they share a common place. But when in

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the morning, it is time to go, each goes his way. They diverge on different paths, never to meet again.

Your journey on this earth plane is like that. But because you do not think about it, you develop attachment and get yourself involved. Attachment leads to many other situations and states of mind and the ultimate result is always pain. Attachment leads to all your problems.

When Mahatma Gandhi soon after he left South Africa and came to India and decided to devote his entire life for the service of the Indian people, he came in contact with Srimad Bhagavad-Gita and made it his personal guide-book and manual of life. He was so much impressed by the vision in this compact little scripture that he decided to make it available to all Gujarati people by translating it into Gujarati, just as, much later Sri Vinobaji translated it into simple Marathi verse which is known as *Gitaaee.* Mahatma Gandhi interestingly enough gave it the name *Anasakti Yoga,* also known as the Yoga of Detachment or the Gospel of Selfless Action.

What does Gita have to tell and teach to the traveller? Go through this world in a spirit of detachment. Do everything that has to be done, fulfil your duties discharge your obligations; but be unattached. Know that even this fulfilling of obligations and doing of duties is ultimately being engineered and carried on by some other great Power that pervades the universe and works in and through everyone of us. Arjuna had the good fortune of the actual demonstration of this by Bhagavan Sri Krishna Himself in The Yoga of The Vision of the Cosmic Form, the Eleventh Chapter. He shows to Arjuna that the whole universe is nothing but His body. There is no army, nothing; everything is finished, everything has been annihilated by the *Virat Vishvaroopa,* the all-pervading Cosmic Form. After coming down from that height of Consciousness, Arjuna says: 'Please come down to assume your normal form; I am unable to bear the impact of this Cosmic Vision.'

What we are supposed to do? The Lord says: *'nimitta-maatram bhava savyasaachin* [Be thou a mere instrument, O Arjuna! XI-33]. Be only an instrument, because I have done whatever has to be done.' It was a state of Consciousness where past, present and future are all fused into one. Arjuna sees the future events as already happened and realizes that he is only a *nimitta,* an instrument.

So, go through your life knowing fully well that some great power is working and doing all the things and you are merely an instrument of His work. Therefore, you must try to be a good instrument, an efficient instrument, so that, that work be done in a perfect manner and the Cosmic is not affected negatively by you; you have to make a positive contribution on your part. Your efficiency will suffer if you get yourself emotionally attached or get yourself involved through desire. If you are *anasakta,* totally detached, then you can act in a way that will not be affected and influenced by your personal involvement. Therefore, Mahatma Gandhi gave his Gujarati version of the Gita, the title of *Anasakti Yoga.*

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This has to be the approach and attitude towards life and the manner in which to live our lives; because in the ultimate context, we have no permanent lasting connection with anyone here. A mystic says:

Bhai, bandhu, kutumb, parivaara, sab jeete jeeke naate hain.

Kiske ho tum? Kaun tumhaaraa? Kiske bal Hari-naama bisaara?

[Brothers, friends, family, relatives, are (all) relations of a living being only. To whom you are (truly) related? For whom you have forgotten (the only real relation,) God?] As long as you are alive, these relations are there; but once the last breath goes away, then who is your relative and who is your friend?

Therefore, go through the life unattached. Fulfil your duties and obligations in a spirit of detachment, while taking full interest in whatever has to be done. When it is being done you should see that you are not caught in the web of delusion, in the net of sorrow and suffering, and you have not to weep and wail. That is what everyone wants. That is the universal quest of all the living beings on earth, specially so, of the human being. Because of the intelligence the man knows what he wants. But even reptiles, insects, birds, beasts, fish, who do not know and cannot understand or analyse the purpose of life and who are all after one thing, namely, avoidance of pain and suffering, have also this quest of satisfaction, contentment, happiness. So the Gita says if you do not see this clearly that you are a temporary dweller on this earth plane, that this life is a journey and you have no ultimate connection with any one here, no one belongs to you ultimately and you do not belong to anyone, if you do not ultimately cultivate this truth-oriented view of life and approach to life, you are bound to get caught in the net of delusion, in the web of *Maya* and then weep and suffer. If you want to avoid sorrow and suffering and that is what everyone wants, *be detached.*

This is the negative side of the problem as to how to conquer sorrow, how to overcome pain, misery and unhappiness. But we are also in quest of positive experience. This negative experience is obtainable even by other means also. If some one has lost everything and becomes insane, he keeps on laughing. But that is not the state we seek. This is not our goal. We should consciously, purposefully and in an intelligent manner work to avoid suffering. This avoiding of suffering takes place automatically in a certain state.

We are more interested in the other side, the constructive and the positive side of the eternal quest of all life, finding a fulfilment, attaining perfection. When there is the sense of lacking, sense of insufficiency, then you are always trying to attain fulfilment.

How can this be achieved? That is the positive side of mysticism. But this has not been enough focused, enough expounded, enough explained. So the Indian philosophy has come to bear the brunt of very severe negative criticism.

There is also a negative fatalistic attitude, a world-denying view of life: No one is interested in making the world a better world. No one is interested in trying to remove the sorrows and pains of others. They say: 'This is all temporary, this will all go away.

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After all, everything is coated with the varnish of death. One day, everyone must leave everything and go. Therefore, why unnecessarily exert oneself?' So there is no positive effort to improve oneself. To some extent it is true. But this is due to non-assimilation of the positive dimension of our understanding of life and philosophy.

The eternal call from ancient times, as reflected in *Yoga Vasishtha* is for *Purushartha Chathushtaya,* the four-fold effort, endeavour; and it has been even built-in in our view of life. An individual human person must strive to obtain certain values to make the life worth living and to enjoy life. While you are here, why should you live in discomfort?

There was a period in human history all over the globe when monasticism, turning away from the world and turning towards God, was interpreted in a very painfully negative way. They believed that you should not give the body any comfort or any pleasurable sensation; because that experience will make you go after that, you will have a craving for it. You will become attached to that pleasurable sensation. That concept was carried to such an unnatural, abnormal, illogical and irrational extreme, that this body was thought to be an obstacle. So they used to have certain practices of subjecting the body to torturous experiences. In summer they will wear very rough camel hair, wearing which you will die of heat. One should not have anything soft, anything cool, anything light. So inside your apparel you wore something very rough, very heavy, very uncomfortable. As though this was not enough, you slept upon a plank of wood and kept a stone as your pillow; not to use any foot-wear, to put on minimum clothes in the winter, and in this worst period even one whipped one's own self. Mortification was carried to such extremes in the medieval period.

This is the most awesome form of penance. But ultimately, nature is nature. The law of Nature cannot be flouted. The person of penance became afflicted by various diseases. He caught pneumonia, or he may get some stroke or burning of the eyes or kidney trouble and all that. But they did not attribute it to their own irrational way of extreme *tapasya*. Ultimately, their own *sadhana* suffered as the body became ill and weak. The body could not bear the strain of this extreme *tapas*. Due to the extremes, the body, the one and the only instrument through which you have to attain the supreme goal by *sadhana,* by appropriate practices, becomes no longer useful. The wrong notion of mortification beyond a certain stage becomes harmful.

This was long recognised by our ancients. They have said: *Ati sarvatra varjayet* [Give up excess of all kinds]. Equally bad is too much indulgence, too much of pampering of the body and the senses. You must know what is the limit of the other kind where if you go beyond a point your body will break down, it will suffer. You must also know the limit where if you have no longer control over the senses, the body becomes indulgent and demanding. It is through constant experimentation you can know what is your golden mean. Each one has got one's own golden mean. You must know your golden mean. There is a very telling, very meaningful saying in Tamil language which says, *Akavukku*

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minjnaal amritham. If you go beyond a certain measure even nectar can become poison. This is a contradiction of the very concept of nectar. Because, nectar is that which makes one immortal, deathless. Nectar can never become a cause of death. Even if a single drop of nectar gets inside you, you will never die, nothing can kill you, death can not touch you. Poison is that which causes instant death. But, it says in a funny way, if you go beyond a limit, even nectar can become poison!

In the wisdom teachings of Srimad Bhagavad Gita, this point is brought home in a very effective and telling way [VI/11-19]. Either way, over-indulgence destroys your chances of attainment and so also over neglecting the needs of the body. Yoga is for that person who keeps a balanced moderation in all the things. Yoga is not for that being who either sleeps too much or denies indispensable minimum requirement of sleep for the physical body. Yoga is not for that person who either eats too much or denies the body the minimum requirement of nourishment that is absolutely, indispensably required for the body.

Yoga is not for the workaholic who indulges in constant activities, over-activity, who is always distracted with some compulsive, impulsive action. He cannot remain quiet. If he remains quiet for five minutes, he will become very restless, very upset! He has to keep on doing something or other because he does not know about the inner wealth and he wants to forget the emptiness within. Nor for that being who is lethargic like a buffalo, who has no desire for activity, always lethargic; that is *tamo-guna*. Yoga is neither for that one who indulges in over-activity, nor for the one who is totally inactive, actionless.

Yoga is for that being who knows how to strike a balance between the two extremes. Therefore, we should know the golden mean, we should know how to strike a balance in all the things in our life. *Samatvam* [evenness of the mind] or moderation in all things is the key for success in Yoga, success in *sadhana*.

With regards to *Vedanta,* they say: 'Within you, you must always have that *bhava,* that attitude that nothing exists; this world is only a dream appearance, there is no reality in it.' You must always cherish this *bhava.* Then only, you will be safe and you can be successful in overcoming all the external impacts and influences. This attitude should always be there within you, it should never be lost. But you should not apply it to your outer relative plane of worldly relation; otherwise it will cause problems. Also, even if you apply this *Mayavada,* this *mithyavada*—everything is *mithya*—to all the three worlds, you should never apply it to your Guru! Don't say he is also *maya,* he is also *mithya.* You must serve him, surrender to him and be like a slave, like a servant to him.

Advaitam trishu lokeshu an-advaitam gurunashah. [Non-duality with all the three worlds, but not with Guru]. You can apply this principle, 'I alone exist, nothing else exists besides me,' towards all the three worlds but not to your Guru.

I used to explain it in this way: The *Advaitic* declaration is based upon the non-dual, transcendental, absolute Experience that goes beyond relativity. That was the Experience

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that was revealed. It was not meant for application in day-to-day life. To explain this, I used to say: Some modern, superb, great, eminent physicists have discovered there is no such thing like real, solid matter. This is all energy, waves of energy. They call it energy in waves. That means, they have come to the view that the real, gross, visible, tangible, solid matter is only our imagination due to the sense perception; there is no such reality. There is no gross, solid matter.

They first thought that the ultimate substance is an atom. But they went beyond and found that even this atom which was once irreducible, smallest of all particles, is divisible, and there are smaller parts within the atom: proton, neutron and electron. When they looked into this electron with modern super-instruments, they saw that even within this electron there is ninety per cent empty space only! There particles are moving at tremendous velocity. So they give the appearance of some tangibility or solidity, but otherwise, it is more of empty space than actual substance or matter.

In this way, ultimately, they came to the conclusion of the Shaakta Philosophy that everything is nothing but Shakti. We have the concepts of Adi Shakti, Kriya Shakti, Para Shakti, the Primal Cosm Power, the motivating Power, and the Transcendental Cosmic Power. The modern Physicists have come to similar discovery and they are trying to make it intelligible to the layman. This is the actuality about this world. That is what they have actually seen, experienced, and ultimately arrived at as the conclusion of modern super-physics.

In the same way as in metaphysics, is that tremendous Experience, the towering pinnacle point of ultimate transcendental, absolute Experience of *Ekameva-advitiyam Brahma* [Brahma is one alone without a second. *Sadachara-anusandhanam,* 44] and *Brahma satyam jagan-mithya.* [Brahma alone is real, the world is unreal. Brahma-jnanavali-mala, 20] That is something which you must keep as your Goal: 'I have to go and attain That, I have to reach that state of non-dual, cosmic Consciousness.' Then there will be no more duality. Pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, joy and sorrow, and all such duals become meaningless, they are at a level that is far below; whereas you go beyond all the relative or opposite dual experiences. You should say: 'Yes, that is the Goal of my life. That is the only Goal to be attained. I must reach that state of non-dual Consciousness. But it is not a principle to be applied to my day-to-day living. Otherwise, unnecessary chaos will arise.'

I used to try to bring home this unavoidable and indispensable axiom of our behaviour in this world by an analogy: Modern physics has come to this discovery, this conclusion, that there is only energy, there is no real, solid, substance called physical matter. Suppose you are in a room and you want to go out. There are a couple of doors. If you say, 'Why should I use the doors? They are nothing but energy. There is no real thing called matter. So let me walk through the wall.' If you try to walk through it, it will hit on your head. Though their discovery, their ultimate declaration, is an undisputed fact, yet it is not a fact which you can bring down to your field of daily relative activity. Then you will have

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to go and get yourself bandaged. Nevertheless, your breaking your head in going through a wall does not contradict or invalidate the truth of the discovery of modern super-physics. It is true but it is not for application in your daily life.

In the same way, *Advaita bhavana* is true in one dimension; but it is not for application. Even that great philosopher Jagadguru Adi Sankaracharya, had to posit and include within his philosophical system, a secondary reality called relative reality. *Brahma satyam, Jagan-mithya. Brahma* is the *kevala Satta,* the absolute Reality. True. But as long as you are bound up in the worldly consciousness, it has also a relative reality, a reality which you can not dismiss, which you cannot ignore. It is known as *Vyavarharika Satta.*

While you are in a state of dream, dream alone is real; outer world does not exist. It is only when you wake up that the world becomes real and the dream world becomes unreal. Similarly, as long as you are here, in your present state of consciousness, this world which has a relative reality, is true and is relevant to you. With reference to your own present state of relative consciousness, where your experience is not non-duality but on the contrary, where your experience is the multifariousness, you do have to make a distinction between red and blue, green and yellow, white and violet. When you are driving a car and on an intersection the red light comes, you cannot drive through it saying that you believe in non-duality and for you there is no distinction between red and green. You will get arrested. So we have to accept the relative reality of the world.

When you have to climb up a staircase you have to use your limbs in one way but when you have to climb down the same staircase you have to use your limbs in a different way. Likewise, you have to use different yardsticks for the two different states. You cannot say: 'I will drink my solids.' It will get stuck and you will get choked. You cannot escape giving the due attention and regard to the relative reality that is very much a fact. As long as you yourself are in a relative state of consciousness, you feel: 'I am a male, I am a female, I am young, I am old, I am tall or I am short.' If you are tall, you can reach up and take something from a height; but if you are short, you cannot say: 'All these notions are false, I am the Atman.' You have to ask for a stool, get up on it and then take the thing.

This being the case, this world has to be dealt with on its own level, on its own dimension of reality. Having come into this world, we should know that all the things are limited, changeful, perishable. Therefore, no lasting experience of true happiness can be found here. This is only fifty per cent of the truth. Not only happiness is not to be found here, on the contrary, what you get here if you get involved, is only weeping and wailing, grief and sorrow, disappointment and frustration, agony and misery, little fulfilment, then again frustration and disappointment!

What is the way to avoid it? Be *detached.* Don't get caught in the net of attachment.

What is the way of positive experience? This is where the constructive and creative side of Yoga-Vedanta comes. Does it simply say: 'Don't go in that direction. Don't get

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involved. You will get caught in sorrow, you will weep and wail.' Does it leave you in the lurch like that? No, no, no! It also says; 'Go in that direction, you will get total bliss, total satisfaction, eternal happiness. You will get all that you want and even more than what you ever imagined you will get!'

How to do it? What are the means? Well, that is the real question.

Here I would like to give you two oft-quoted analogies. One is an analogy from Vedanta, and the other is an analogy which you can imagine from your common sense.

Someone was imprisoned on a tower because he had displeased the ruler of the land. His hands and feet were bound by a rope and he was thrust up like a chicken, thrown up on the tower. While coming down, the jailer closed the door of the tower. No one had any access to the tower. He was left to die exposed to the wind, heat, cold of the night and may be vultures later on. He was in such helpless condition; but he was not a person to despair. As an optimist, he thought: 'There is nothing hopeless. Even in the most extreme conditions, there may be some way out. There is always some hope.' So, as he lay there tied in that helpless condition, it struck him: 'So long as I go on struggling with this bond, the tightness will not relax. I must relax and make myself as small as possible. Then only some part, some little bond may become a little loose.' Several hours passed. Whole day, he had not taken anything. His belly was now empty. That also became a blessing in disguise. He thought: 'Now is the time. I will try to relax.' He relaxed his muscles, he tried to make himself as small as possible. He drew his belly in, and slowly tried to work upon the bonds. At long last, he managed after a very, very careful gradual effort to bring out one bond. From that point onwards, he went on loosening his body. After much effort, exhaustion, perspiration and straining, he managed to gradually remove all the knots that had bound him. The rope which had made him a helpless prisoner, lay at his feet to rescue him.

When it was totally dark, he tied one end of the rope to some portion of the tower and then let him slowly slip down the entire length of the rope. At the end of the rope he hung himself and gave up even that rope which had rescued him, and jumped on the ground to become liberated for ever.

Suppose, a man is walking in a forest and a sharp thorn enters his foot. It is so painful that he cannot walk further. He is not equipped with a thorn-puller, a needle or any sharp instrument. There were many thorns around. He picks up a strong, sharp thorn. He uses it as an instrument to pull out the thorn from his foot. The cause of his pain and agony was a thorn; and a similar thorn comes to his rescue! Now, he discards both the thorns and moves ahead on his path.

What causes the bondage of the *jivatma?* Our ancients say the cause of the bondage of *jivatma* is attachment, desires, craving. Once you are caught in this net of *Maya,* you are bound. Now your desires go on increasing; there is more and more craving for this thing and that thing, for money, wealth, position, power, authority, status, enjoyments,

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name and fame, appreciation and all that. You run after so many things! Anything you run after, catches hold of you, you become possessed by it, you become enslaved by it. Our scriptures tell us that if you are caught by even one of the five senses, you are doomed.

A fish is caught in the hook due to its greed of taste; a moth burns itself into the flame due to its attraction of *roopa,* the outer appearance; a deer is killed because of its attraction for sound of music, an elephant falls in captivity being blinded by touch; and the attraction of smell destroys the bee. Various creatures get caught by one or the other senses. But in the poor human individual all the five senses are centred! He is enslaved by all the five senses! When a single sense is enough to lead to your destruction what will be your fate when all the five attack you? So, be very careful and guard yourself from being enslaved by the senses.

You are caught in this net of *Maya,* in this worldly process because your mind conceives desire, because your mind gets attached. It is the mind which is doing *avichara* and *aviveka,* improper reasoning and lack of right discrimination. It is the mind which says, 'I want this thing and I want that thing; I want to enjoy the things; my happiness is in these objects of attractions. I want status, I want position, popularity.' The mind misguides you and pollutes your intellect also. Your intellect is clouded due to lack of proper enquiry and discrimination. That is the second factor that contributes to your bondage.

Then comes your involvement in the ceaseless activity, driven by the desires and attachment, emotions and sentiments. This is another dimension of the mind.

So long you lack *viveka* and *vichara,* your mind moves in the wrong direction. Your personality has four aspects: The physical level, the emotional level, the mental level and the intellectual level. In the absence of *viveka* and *vichara,* you are caught in the net of the outer world process of the phenomenal existence through all these four aspects of your nature. This is the situation. But the thorn which was the cause of the problem, becomes the solution of the problem; and the same rope which bound the man, becomes the means of his freedom. So, applying the solution of these analogies, you should make use of all your four faculties to attain freedom by diverting them Godwards. You are the highest of all the creations of God and you have been endowed with the power to think and feel, reason, and act in a purposeful way. But, unfortunately all of them are applied in a negative manner in a negative direction.

You have to reverse that process. Your attachment to persons and to the passing, perishable objects of pleasures and enjoyments is the cause of your delusion and bondage. Now make use of the same faculties and attach yourself through intense longing, through intense devotion, intense emotion, to the eternal Reality. Put your reasoning onto the right channel through enquiry and discrimination. Analyse the real nature of this world and know that there is not an iota of real happiness in these objects of attraction which tempt you in sense indulgence. They are only source of pain and sorrow. Yet they always tempt you, draw you towards them, make you run after them, enmesh you, entangle you, enslave

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you. Know well that they are momentary and useless, there is no real worth in them. They are *alpa.* How can you have any attachment once you know the real nature of the world?

So making use of the intellect in the right way, in a rational, logical way, with proper discrimination, you can convert the very bondage into an instrument of freeing yourself from the bondage of the outer world through the same mind with the process of *vichara* and *viveka*: 'What is the Reality beyond? What is it that can make me really satisfied, happy, free, full of peace? That is only in the non-dual Experience. *Dvaitad vai bhayam bhavati.* Where there is duality, there is fear. If there is no duality, there is no fear. Who is to fear whom, if there is only One non-dual Consciousness pervading all?'

Vedanta says, through intellect, through proper reasoning, proper discrimination, proper analytical thinking, come to the conclusion that there is only one Reality, the non-dual Consciousness of the Supreme Reality alone. There is Absolute Peace, Absolute fearlessness, Absolute joy, eternal happiness in That.

In that way, attach yourself to That. And through your *bhava,* through your sentiment, either through feeling or through reasoning or through giving a spiritual turn to all activities, always feel: 'I am always in the presence of God. Therefore, all activities are adoration to that constant Presence, in whose presence I live, move and act.'

If the power of thought is completely diverted towards and focused upon ephemeral things, ultimately, it will become a costly bondage. If the same power of thought is directed towards the Great Reality, being taken away from the passing scene, turned round and given a new direction; and the outgoing power of the mind is made to reverse its direction, made indrawn, through *pratyahara, antarmukhatva,* [withdrawal of the mind from the sense objects and focussing the mind inward] then the scattered rays of the mind are focused within through discipline, through the subsiding of this constant restlessness of the mind by ceaseless practice.

Raja Yoga is the *yoga* of the mind, *yoga* at the mind level, *yoga* of the thought-power. Its *sadhana* is in completely subsiding this constant restlessness of the mind and then gathering the rays of the mind inwards into one powerful ray and centring it upon the concept of the Great Reality, making it steady and focusing it upon It like 'a lamp placed in a windless spot does not flicker (B.G. VI-19),' by constant practice again and again. Whenever the mind moves away, bring it back and once again focus it upon the Great Reality.

Then one day you will succeed. The mind will stop moving out. It will lose its restless nature. It will change its nature and will become your ally, become your asset. It will no longer be your liability or your problem. It will be your solution. It will become your asset. A concentrated mind focused upon the supreme Reality will ultimately bring you to a state where the outer world fades away, recedes and becomes centred in the Reality through the concentrated power of your mind.

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So that is Yoga of the mind. Vedanta is the Yoga of intelligence, rational intellect, reasoning process, Vichara Marga. Prema Marga or Bhakti Yoga is *yoga* of the heart, *yoga* of the emotions, yoga of all your feelings, yoga of sentiments. Karma Yoga is the Yoga of connecting all your activities from morning till night, with God, not with a remote Reality but here and now Reality, because God is all-pervading, God is present here all the time. The world is always filled with God's presence. Connect all your activities with God manifested around you, then it becomes *yoga.* Action will not take you away from God, it will take you towards God. Offer all your actions to Him, and your whole life will become spiritual. All the outer activities of the day-to-day life will also now take you in that very same direction in which your devotion is trying to take you, in which your concentration is trying to take you, in which your Vedantic Vichara Marga is trying to take you!

Then what happens? Your entire life becomes integrated and takes the form of the Absolute. This is the rationale, this is the scientific basis of the four Yogas, namely, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Dhyana Yoga and Jnana Yoga.

Thus the very situation which is now your problem, is now holding you bound, that very situation becomes converted into a liberating process when you divert and channelise all these potentials of your human nature in that direction, Godward direction. Now your whole personality and all your actions become God-oriented.

You are having in yourself, all the ingredients for your liberation. You don't have to search outside. God does not expect you to do something, with something which do not belong to you, which you don't have, which He has not endowed you with. Whatever has now become your problem, the cause of your bondage, that very thing becomes the means of your liberation, by taking away from here and diverting it in that direction.

At the end of his life Gurudev gave two words to sum up the entire Yoga and Vedanta: DETACH, ATTACH. *Maya Ka sang Todo, Hari ke sang jodo.* [Detach yourself from *Maya,* attach yourself to the Lord.] That is the Yoga-Vedanta *sutra* for you.

Ponder deeply over this and try to find out how you can do this process of gradually detaching from here and attaching it There, giving the Godward direction and keeping up in that direction. In that lies your sure Liberation. Let all your faculties become oriented towards It. Let

Asato maa sad-gamaya;

Tamaso maa jyotir-gamaya;

Mrityor-ma Amritam gamaya

God bless you all. Hari Om Tat Sat.

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5

GURUS AND PHILOSOPHERS OF VEDANTA

Shankaracharya

Shankara and his disciples, Padmapada and Suresvara, are arguably the most important philosophers in the Advaita Vedanta tradition. After the *Mandukya* Karikas, Shankara's commentaries to the Upanishads, Brahmasutras and Bhagavadgita are the oldest extant Vedanta treatises. The importance of Shankara can be seen from the fact that every vedantin after him makes his mark either by expanding on his thought or by refuting him.

Shankara can be dated more or less reliably to the 8th century CE. Upto Suka, the first few gurus cannot be dated to historical times. The date of Gaudapada, the author of the *Mandukya* Karikas, is usually inferred from the tradition that he was Shankara's teacher's teacher, and from references to the *Mandukya* Karikas in other works. However, not much historical information is known about Govinda Bhagavatpada, Shankara's teacher, except that Shankara salutes him in the invocatory verses in some of his works.

Shankara's Life

The following is based upon accounts known through oral tradition and texts like the *Madhaviya Shankara vijayam*. There exists some controversy about Shankara's date, but most traditions are quite unanimous about other details.

Birth and Childhood: Shankara was born to the *Nambudiri Brahmana* couple, Sivaguru and Aryamba, in a little village called Kaladi in Kerala. The couple had remained childless for a long time, and prayed for children at the Vadakkunnathan (Vrshahala) temple in nearby Trichur. Shiva is said to have appeared to the couple in a dream and promised them a choice of one son who would be short-lived but the most brilliant

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philosopher of his day, or many sons who would be mediocre at best. The couple opted for a brilliant, but short-lived son, and so Shankara was born.

Shankara lost his father when quite young, and his mother performed his *upanayana* ceremonies with the help of her relatives. Shankara excelled in all branches of traditional vaidika learning. A few miracles are reported about the young Shankara. As a brahmaharin, he went about collecting alms from families in the village. A lady who was herself extremely poor, but did not want to send away the boy empty-handed, gave him the last piece of Amla fruit she had at home. Shankara, sensing the abject poverty of the lady, composed a hymn (kanakadhara stavam) to Sri, the goddess of wealth, right at her doorstep. As a result, a shower of golden Amlas rewarded the lady for her piety. On another occasion, Shankara is said to have re-routed the course of the purna river, so that his old mother would not have to walk a long distance to the river for her daily ablutions.

Samnyasa: Shankara was filled with the spirit of renunciation early in his life. Getting married and settling to the life of a householder was never part of his goal in life, though his mother was anxious to see him as a *Grihastha*. Once when he was swimming in the river, a crocodile caught hold of his leg. Shankara sensed that he was destined to die at that moment, and decided to directly enter the fourth Ashrama of samnyasa right then. This kind of renunciation is called Apat samnyasa. The crocodile released him when he thus mentally decided to renounce the world, and Shankara decided to regularize his decision by going to an accomplished guru. To comfort his anxious mother, he promised that he would return at the moment of her death, to conduct her funeral rites, notwithstanding the fact that he would be a Sannyasi then.

Shankara then travelled far and wide in search of a worthy guru who would initiate him and regularize his vow of samnyasa, till he came to the banks of the river narmada in central India. Here was the Ashrama of Govinda Bhagavatpada, the disciple of Gaudapada, the famous author of the *Mandukya* Karikas. Shankara was accepted as a disciple by Govinda, who initiated him into the Paramahamsa order of samnyasa, the highest kind of renunciation. Seeing the intellectual acumen of his disciple, Govinda commanded Shankara to expound the philosophy of Vedanta through commentaries on the principal Upanishads, the Brahmasutras and the Gita. Shankara took leave of his guru and travelled to various holy places in India, composing his commentaries in the meantime.

At this time he was barely a teenager. He attracted many disciples around him, prominent among whom was Sanandana, who was later to be called Padmapada. In this period, Shankara wrote commentaries on Badarayana's Brahmasutras, the various Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. These commentaries, called *Bhashyas*, stand at the pinnacle of Indian philosophical writing, and have triggered a long tradition of sub-commentaries known as Varttikas, Tikas and Tippanis. He also commented upon the *Adhyatma-patala* of the Apastambasutras, and on vyasa's Bhashya to Patanjali's *Yogasutras*.

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In addition to these commentarial texts, Shankara wrote independent treatises called Prakarana Granthas, including the *Upadesasahasri*, *Atmabodha*, etc.

In addition to writing his own commentaries, Shankara sought out leaders of other schools, in order to engage them in debate. As per the accepted philosophical tradition in India, such debates helped to establish a new philosopher, and also to win disciples and converts from other schools. It was also traditional for the loser in the debate to become a disciple of the winner. Thus Shankara debated with Buddhist philosophers, with followers of Samkhya and with Purva mimamsakas, the followers of vedic ritualism, and proved more than capable in defeating all his opponents in debate. Shankara then sought out *Kumarila Bhatta*, the foremost proponent of the Purva Mimamsa in his age, but Bhatta was on his deathbed and directed Shankara to Visvarupa, his disciple. Visvarupa is sometimes identified with Mandana Misra.

Shankara's debate with Visvarupa was unique. The referee at the debate was visvarupa's wife, Bharati, who was herself very well-learned, and regarded as an incarnation of Goddess Sarasvati. At stake was a whole way of life. The agreement was that if Visvarupa won, Shankara would consent to marriage and the life of a householder, whereas if Shankara won, Visvarupa would renounce all his wealth and possessions and become a Sannyasi disciple of Shankara.

The debate is said to have lasted for whole weeks, till in the end, Visvarupa had to concede defeat and become a Sannyasi Bharati was a fair judge, but before declaring Shankara as the winner, she challenged Shankara with questions about Kamasastra, which he knew nothing about. Shankara therefore requested some time, during which, using the subtle yogic process called *parakaya-pravesa*, he entered the body of a dying king and experienced the art of love with the queens. Returning to visvarupa's home, he answered all of bharati's questions, after which Visvarupa was ordained as a Sannyasi by the name of Suresvara. He was to become the most celebrated disciple of Shankara, writing Varttikas to Shankara's *Bhashyas* on the Yajurveda Upanishads, in addition to his own independent texts on various subjects.

Establishment of Mathas: Shankara continued to travel with his disciples all over the land, all the while composing philosophical treatises and engaging opponents in debate. It is said that none of his opponents could ever match his intellectual prowess and the debates always ended with Shankara's victory. No doubt this is true, given the unrivalled respect and popularity that Shankara's philosophical system enjoys to this day. In the course of his travels, Shankara stayed for a long time at the site of the old Ashrama of the Rishis vibhandaka and Rshyasringa, in the place known as Srngagiri (Sringeri).

Some texts mention that Shankara stayed at Sringeri for twelve years. A hermitage grew around him here, which soon developed into a famous Matha (monastery) Suresvara, the disciple whom he had won after long debate, was installed as the head of this new Ashrama. Similar Mathas were established in the pilgrim centres of Puri, Dvaraka and

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Joshimath near Badrinath, and Padmapada, Hastamalaka and Trotaka were placed in charge of them. These are known as the Amnaya Mathas, and they continue to function today. Their heads have also come to be known as Shankaracharyas, in honour of their founder, and revered as *jagadgurus*, or teachers of the world. Shankara also organized the community of *ekadandi* monks into the Sampradaya of *Dasanami Sannyasins*, and affiliated them with the four Mathas that he established.

Meanwhile, Shankara heard that his mother was dying, and decided to visit her. Remembering his promise to her, he performed her funeral rites. His ritualistic relatives would not permit him to do the rites himself, as he was a Sannyasi, but Shankara overrode their objections, and built a pyre himself and cremated his mother in her own backyard. After this, he resumed his travels, visiting many holy places, reviving pujas at temples that had fallen into neglect, establishing Shri yantras at devi temples as in Kanchipuram, and composing many devotional hymns.

Ascension of the Sarvajnapitha: In the course of his travels, Shankara reached Kashmir. Here was a temple dedicated to Sharada (Sarasvati), the goddess of learning, which housed the *Sarvajnapitha*, the Throne of Omniscience. It was a tradition for philosophers to visit the place and engage in debate. The victorious one would be allowed to ascend the *Sarvajnapitha*. It is said that no philosopher from the southern region had ever ascended the pitha, till Shankara visited Kashmir and defeated all the others there. He then ascended the *Sarvajnapitha* with the blessings of Goddess Sharada. (A few centuries later, Ramanuja, the teacher of Visishtadvaita, would visit the same *Sarvajnapitha* in search of the Baudhayana vrtti. However, a variant tradition places the *Sarvajnapitha* in the south Indian city of Kanchipuram.)

Shankara was reaching the age of 32 now. He had expounded the Vedanta philosophy through his writings; he had attracted many intelligent disciples to him, who could carry on the vedantic tradition; and he had established monastic centres for them in the form of Mathas. His had been a short, but eventful life. He retired to the Himalayas and disappeared inside a cave near Kedarnath. This cave is traditionally pointed out as the site of his Samadhi. Other variant traditions place Shankara's last days at Karavirpitham or at Mahur in Maharashtra, Trichur in Kerala or Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu. It is a measure of Shankaracharya's widespread fame that such conflicting traditions have arisen around his name.

True to the traditions of samnyasa, Shankara was a peripatetic monk, who travelled the length and breadth of the country in his short lifetime. His fame spread so far and wide, that various legends are recounted about him from different parts of India. The true Sannyasi that he was, he lived completely untouched by the fabric of society. So much so that even the location of Kaladi, his birth-place, remained generally unknown for a long time. The credit of identifying this village in Kerala goes to one of his 19th-century successors at Sringeri, Sri Sacchidananda Sivabhinava Narsimha Bharati. Similarly, the

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credit of renovating Shankara's *Samadhi-sthala* near Kedarnath, goes to Sri Abhinava Sacchidananda Tirtha, his 20th-century successor at Dvaraka.

The Shankaravijaya Literature

A number of works titled *Shankaravijaya*, or *Shankara digvijaya*, are extant in India. These are typically known after the names of their authors, but are mostly hagiographic accounts of Shankara's life, with myth and legend interspersed with historical fact. The primary reason for this situation is that most of these texts were written many centuries after Shankara lived, so that these authors already regarded Shankara as a legendary figure. The following is a brief survey of these texts.

Madhaviya Shankaravijaya: The *Madhaviya* is probably the oldest available, and also the most authentic and widely known among the different *Shankaravijayas* today. It is certainly the most popular such text in the Advaita tradition, and is also known as the *samkshepa Shankarajaya*. The popularity of this work derives from the fame of its author, Madhava, who is usually identified with Vidyaranya, the 14th century Mathadhipati at Sringeri. Old manuscripts of this work are available from diverse places in India, and printed editions based on a comparison of various manuscripts are available from as early as 1863 CE. Two commentaries have been written to the *Madhaviya*, one titled *Dindima*, by dhanapati suri (composed in 1798 CE), and another titled *Advaitarajyalakshmi* by Achyutaraya (composed in 1824 CE).

There are a couple of good English translations of the *Madhaviya*, one by Swami Tapasyananda of the Ramakrishna Math, and another by K. Padmanabhan. Contemporary accounts of Shankara's life follow this text in most details, *e.g.* birth in Kaladi, meeting with his guru on the banks of the river Narmada, writing of commentaries, debate with Mandana Misra, establishment of the Sharada temple at Sringeri, ascension of the *Sarvajnapitha* in Kashmir and his last days in the Himalayas.

There has been some doubt in recent times about the date and authorship of the *Madhaviya Shankaravijaya*, including charges that it was reworked extensively in the 19th century CE. Almost all of this criticism is baseless. If the author of this work is not identical with Vidyaranya, the latest date that can be put to it is 1798 CE, the year in which the *Dindima* commentary was completed. Moreover, another author, Sadananda, who wrote a *Shankaravijaya sara* in 1783, informs us that his source is Madhava's work.

As such, the criticism that the *Madhaviya* was written as late as the 19th century CE, or that portions of it were re-written recently, cannot be upheld Swami Tapasyananda is correct in dismissing such criticism as nothing more than "bazaar gossip." However, the earliest possible date of this work (14th century CE) is still several centuries later than Shankara's own date. Some modern historians who doubt that Shankara established any Mathas at all, attribute the origin of the tradition of four Amnaya Mathas to Madhava. However, it must be noted that the *Madhaviya Shankaravijaya* gives only a general

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description of the establishment of Mathas, at Sringeri and other places, but does not specifically mention the number four.

Anandagiriya Shankaravijaya: This work is not available today, although according to many secondary sources, it must have existed at one time. It is attributed to Anandagiri, the 13th century author of well-known *Tikas* to Shankaracharya's *Bhashyas*. One 19th century author, who wrote a commentary to the *Madhaviya* refers to Anandagiri's *Shankaravijaya* as *Brihat Shankaravijaya* in one place and as *Prachina Shankaravijaya* in another place. It seems clear that this text was considered to be old (*Prachina*) and huge (*Brihat*). However, as it is no longer extant, the quotations attributed to this text are not very trustworthy.

In recent times, there have been various claims about a *Brihat Shankaravijaya* of an author named Chitsukha, although no manuscripts of this work have ever been available. No secondary sources refer to this text either, unlike the case with Anandagiri's text Chitsukha is claimed to have been a childhood friend of Shankara's, and his work is therefore claimed to be an authoritative eye-witness account. However, even the source for this story about Chitsukha remains unknown, as none of the other *Shankaravijayas* mention such a childhood friend who witnessed all of Shankara's life. All claims about the *Brihat Shankaravijaya* of Chitsukha seem extremely far-fetched, and within the living Advaita tradition, there is great controversy over the very existence of this text. There is a more recent text, called *Brihat Shankaravijaya*, by one Brahmananda Sarasvati, which seems to date from the 17th or 18th century.

Another *Prachina Shankaravijaya*. As with the *Brihat Shankaravijaya* of Chitsukha, nothing specific is known about this *Prachina Shankaravijaya* either, as all attempts to trace source manuscripts have failed. Some quotations from a *Prachina Shankaravijaya* are found in some very recent works, but the real source of these quotations remains unknown.

Anantanandagiriya Shankaravijaya: In my opinion, this work is very unreliable. To begin with, it is a very late text and all available versions seem extremely corrupt. The author of this text identifies himself as Anantanandagiri. Many scholars mistakenly identify this text with that of Anandagiri, the Tikakara, probably due to the misleading similarity of their names. Among these, H. H. Wilson thinks that the author is *an unblusing liar*, because he reports miracles and supernatural events associated with Shankara. However, he seems prepared to accept this text's description of Hindu religious cults.

About forty out of the seventy odd chapters in this work describe some 72 different religious cults and sects prevalent in India, which Wilson uses in his study. A. C. Burnell, however, thinks that the work is spurious and very modern, written in the interests of southern Mathas which had broken their ties with the Sringeri Matha. Be that as it may, a casual reading of this *Shankaravijaya* text is enough to convince the reader that its

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author cannot be identified with Anandagiri at all Anantanandagiri appears to be a quite different author altogether. He quotes sections from the *Adhikarana ratnamaia*, a 14th-century work of Vidyaranya and Bharati Tirtha, but attributes these quotations to Shankara. He also makes barely veiled references to Ramanuja, the 11th-century teacher of Visishtadvaita, and AnandaTirtha, the 13th-century teacher of dvaita. Both of them have been described as direct disciples of Shankara himself.

Moreover, most of the available manuscripts of this work are incomplete, and even these seem to have been heavily tampered with. Two separate accounts of Shankara's life may be found in different editions of this work. For example, the 19th century editions from Calcutta, and all their source manuscripts, describe Shankara's birth at Chidambaram in Tamil Nadu, while the 1971 Madras edition says that Shankara was born at Kaladi in Kerala. The earlier 19th century editions mention a Matha at Sringeri, and no Matha at Kanchipuram.

However, in the 1971 Madras edition, an Ashrama has been mentioned *near* Sringeri, and a Matha at Kanchipuram has been described in great detail. All editions mention that Shankara stayed at Sringeri for twelve years, and his last days are placed at Kanchipuram, but this text is totally silent about any *Sarvajnapitha*. It has been pointed out that the 1971 Madras edition is not true to the manuscripts that it lists as its sources. T. M. P. Mahadevan's introduction to this edition also wrongly identifies this work with that of Anandagiri, the Tikakara, and claims that this must be the work that is called both *Brihat* and *Prachina*. However, Mahadevan is silent about the *Brihat* text said to have been written by Chitsukha and the *Prachina* text attributed to mukakavi.

Cidvilasiya Shankaravijaya: This text is also known as the *Shankaravijaya vilasa*, and was probably written between the 15th and 17th centuries. It is in the form of a dialogue between one Chidvilasa and his disciple, named Vijnanakanda. This is one of the few texts that explicitly record the tradition that four Mathas were established by Shankara, at Sringeri, Dvaraka, Puri and Badrinath Chidvilasa devotes three entire chapters to the founding of the Sringeri Matha, and one chapter to a *Sarvajnapitha* at Kanchipuram. However, he does not say anything about the establishment of a fifth Matha at Kanchipuram, and Shankara's last days are placed near Badrinath in the Himalayas. Except for its variant tradition about the *Sarvajnapitha*, this text also agrees with the *Madhaviya* in most other details.

Keraliya Shankaravijaya: This text is also called the *Shankaracharyacarita* and is attributed to one govindanatha in all manuscripts. This text conflates the variant traditions about the *Sarvajnapitha*, and mentions both Kashmir and Kanchipuram in the same verse. It is completely silent about the establishment of any Mathas, and describes Shankara's last days at the vrshacalesvara temple in Trichur, Kerala. In this last detail, it differs from all other available oral traditions and *Shankaravijaya* texts. It dates from the 17th century.

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Other Minor Texts: The *kushmanda Shankaravijaya* of Purushottama Bharati describes the establishment of a Sharada temple at a place called Pammapura, and is rather unique in describing Shankara and his four disciples as incarnations of the five Pandavas, who are in turn described as partial incarnations of Shiva! A 17th century author named rajacudamani Dikshita wrote a short hagiographical poem named *Shankarabhyudaya*. Among more recent works (late 18th century and after), sadananda's *Shankaravijaya sara* and Nilakantha's *Shankaramandara saurabha* follow the details given in the *Madhaviya*.

Both authors explicitly mention their source in their introductory chapters, Nilakantha also wrote another poem named *Shankarabhyudaya*, which is one of the few works to give the 788 CE date for Shankara's birth. Another *Shankarabhyudaya* is attributed to one Tirumala Dikshita. This and a work known as *Vyasachaliya Shankaravijaya* are of extremely doubtful authenticity, as they reproduce a large number of verses from the *Madhaviya Shankaravijaya*. The *Bhagavat padabhyudaya* of Mahakavi Lakshmana Surin is an early 20th century work, which recounts all the traditional details of Shankara's life.

Determining Shankara's Date-an Overview of Ancient Sources and Modern Literature

The Sources: Placing Shankara in a period according to the modern calendar is a difficult problem. The official date accepted currently is 788-820 CE, and the Government of India celebrated the 1200th anniversary of Shankara's birth in 1988. This date is largely based upon one traditional view prevalent in India.

However, the date is still open to question, as pointed out by Swami Tapasyananda in his translation of the *Madhaviya Shankaravijayam*. This difficulty is experienced for almost all personalities in Indian history, due to paucity of proper records and conflicting traditions current in different parts of the country. As far as the problem of dating Shankara is concerned, our sources of information are: internal evidence from Shankara's works, the astronomical details recorded in some of the Shankaravijayams, and the traditional accounts kept in the *Advaita Mathas* in India.

Internal Evidence: Of these three sources, a lot of scholarly work has been done in the recent past, analyzing the internal evidence from Shankara's works. The date now seems to be converging to the early 8th century CE. The most important internal evidence comes from Shankara's verbatim quotation of Dharmakirti, the Buddhist logician. Hsuan Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, who visited India in the time of Harshavardhana, king of Thanesar (606-647 CE), gives clues to Dharmakirti's date. He also mentions Bhartrhari, but not of Shankara. It follows that Shankara is post-Dharmakirti, and possibly post-Heuan-Tsang also. Critical academic scholars are converging to a date near 700 CE for Shankara's period.

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Astronomical Details: The astronomical details in the various *Shankaravijaya* texts are not of much use. More often than not, the details in one work contradict those in another, and one cannot rely on any of them unless one is preferentially biased to accept one of the *Shankaravijayas* as more authoritative than the others. Dates ranging from the 5th cent BC to 8th cent CE have been calculated on the basis of such astronomical details.

One further complication is that some astronomical information is said to have been obtained from works which are not available anywhere in India. So it is difficult even to authenticate the astronomical details from their supposed sources. Also, not all the currently available texts titled *Shankaravijaya* are accepted as authoritative within the living Advaita tradition. Under the circumstances, it should be noted that the astronomical references in one text is only as good or as bad as all the other such details in other texts, and no firm conclusion can be drawn about their validity.

Records of Mathas: Whether Shankara established any Mathas at all has been questioned in the modern literature. Thus, Paul Hacker attributes the tradition of four Amnaya Mathas at Sringeri, Puri, Dvaraka and Joshimath to Vidyaranyasvamin. The native oral tradition, however, takes the history of these four Mathas, each associated with one of the four geographical directions and one of the four vedas, to Shankaracharya himself. The *Dasanami Sannyasi Sampradaya*, with its various akhadas in northern India, accepts affiliation only with these four Mathas, though such affiliation is largely nominal. There seems to be some historical evidence for the existence of the oldest Dasanami akhadas as early as the 9th century CE.

However, as Swami Tapasyananda points out, the evidence of the Dasanami Sannyasi tradition has never been properly taken into account in the modern literature. It seems very likely that the tradition of four Amnaya Mathas reflects historical fact. It is immaterial whether Shankara established them himself or whether these four Mathas developed naturally at the places where the four famous disciples of Shankara lived and taught. It is clear that even if they were not actually established by Shankara himself, the four Amnaya Mathas came into existence early in the history of post-Shankaran Advaita Vedanta.

Of these four Mathas, the Joshimath title had long been vacant, till it was revived in 1940 CE. Consequently, it does not have many ancient records. The Dvaraka and Puri Mathas have, in the past, claimed a date of 5th century BC for Shankara. This is partly based upon a dating of a grant by a king named sudhanva who is supposed to have been a contemporary of Shankara. Nothing else is known about this king, and the grant itself has not been dated with any accuracy.

In any case, it should be remembered that the records of the Dvaraka and Puri Mathas are rather fragmentary, because they have had patchy histories, with periods when there were no presiding Shankaracharyas. This is also accepted by the administrations of these

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institutions, and they do not hold to the 5th century BC date with absolute certainty. Meanwhile, Sringeri has been the only Matha of the original four which has had an unbroken succession of *Mathadhipatis*. This may be no more than an accident of history, as southern India has not experienced as many political upheavals as the north. Given these facts, among the traditional sources, only the Sringeri records seem to lend themselves to critical historical analysis.

The Sringeri Matha's record states that Shankara was born in the 14th year of the reign of Vikramaditya. The record does not give any clue about the identity of this king. Some 19th century researchers identified this king with the famous Vikramaditya of the Gupta dynasty, thereby postulating a date of 44 BC for Shankara. A period of more than 700 years was then assigned to Suresvara, because the later successors in the Sringeri list can all be dated reasonably accurately from the 8th century downwards. This is rather anomalous, and can be resolved quite neatly, as pointed out by Mr. B. Lewis Rice in his Mysore Gazetteer.

If one identifies the Vikramaditya as a member of the Western Chalukya dynasty, which ruled from Badami in Karnataka, one gets a much more reasonable date for Shankara. The Chalukya dynasty reached its greatest fame in the time of Pulakesin II, a contemporary of Harshavardhana. According to historians, there were two kings named Vikramaditya in this Chalukya dynasty-Vikramaditya I ruled in the late 7th century CE, while Vikramaditya II ruled in the early 8th century. However, there is still some ambiguity with respect to which of these two Vikramadityas is actually meant, but as with most Indian historical records, this is the best one can do.

It is more reasonable to identify the Vikramaditya of the Sringeri record with one of these two Chalukyan kings, who ruled from Karnataka, rather than the northern Gupta king, whose empire did not include southern India. This interpretation of the Sringeri record is also consistent with the internal evidence from Shankara's works. In either case, this implies that the earliest date that one can postulate for Shankara has to be in the late 7th century CE. Swami Tapasyananda also quotes a letter from Sringeri, which makes it clear that this Matha claims nothing more than what its record states, interpretation of dates being the historian's job. This is the sensible approach to take, given the fact that traditions in India tend to be rather ambiguous in their chronology.

In addition to these four original Mathas, a number of other *Advaita Mathas* have come into being over the centuries, some of which are quite well-known. These Mathas either started out as branches of the original institutions, or were set up as independent monasteries by notable Sannyasis of the Dasanami order. With the proliferation of such Mathas came a number of "traditions," many of them conflicting with one another in details. For example, some of these Mathas also claim to have been established by Shankara himself. Some of them also claim 5th century BC to be the date of Shankara.

Conflicting Traditions: Historically, such claims often resulted in serious conflicts with the traditions of the undisputed four. The propagation of such conflicts was helped

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by the fact that the various *Advaita Mathas* had become politically influential institutions, with access to land and revenue donated by various rulers at different times. It is a fact that this has led to fierce rivalries in the past among the followers of different Mathas. Such rivalries are not unknown in northern India, but they have particularly been the cause of many problems in southern Indian sources.

This is probably because of the intimate connection of the founders of the Vijayanagara empire with the Sringeri Matha, and the competition by other *Mathadhipatis* in the south for similar honours as traditionally accorded to the Sringeri Matha. Every southern Matha with a claim to be the "original" one wants to deny Sringeri's chronological primacy. This denial only has the effect of reinforcing the fact that Sringeri has been the most important Advaita Matha for centuries before any of the other Mathas even came into being. As such, their conflicting claims about Shankara's date have to be evaluated in the context of their political motivations in putting forth such dates.

While most of the conflicts among the various Mathas can be dismissed as petty polemics, or as "bazaar gossip," as Swami Tapasyananda does, a serious historian needs to be aware of these problems among the traditional sources. No "tradition" about chronology should be accepted without critical analysis. For example, we find Swami Tapasyananda unwittingly contradicting himself in his introduction to the translation of the Madhaviya, because he tries to concede as much as possible to all kinds of contrary "traditional" dates. There is no need to consider seriously the claim that 788 CE is the date of one "Abhinava Shankara," and to conclude that Shankara's date must therefore be much earlier.

Firstly, the name Abhinava Shankara is mostly used only as a title of respect. Thus, one such Abhinava Shankara, the author of the *Srirudra-Bhashya*, was called rama Brahmananda Tirtha, but he lived much later than the 8th century. Even in the 20th century, various Sannyasins have been titled "Abhinava Shankara" by their followers. There may have been many such Abhinava Shankaras over the centuries, but there is no independent evidence for the existence of someone named "Abhinava Shankara" in the 8th century CE. Secondly, Shankara, the writer of *Bhashyas* to the Brahmasutras and Upanishads, is the Shankaracharya who is relevant for the history of Advaita Vedanta. When internal evidence from the Bhashyakara's undisputed works shows that he lived not earlier than the 8th century CE, it follows that this "Abhinava Shankara" theory is not sufficient reason for positing a date much earlier than the 8th century CE for Shankara himself.

Similarly, some of Prof. Karl Potter's statements are quite misleading. That a fifth Advaita Matha at Kanchipuram is very active today, does not mean that it has always been so, nor does such activity lend any special credibility to its claims to antiquity. The political influence and prestige that a Matha enjoys today also do not confer any legitimacy to such claims. It is inconceivable that the *Dasanami Sampradaya* would have overlooked a fifth Matha in choosing its affiliations. Claims to historicity that are made in a spirit

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of political one-upmanship seldom stand up to serious scrutiny. There is no necessary correlation between the modern activity of an Advaita Matha and its claimed antiquity. Prof. Potter has also not consulted available historical evidence that enables us to date the origin of this fifth Matha.

There will be no cause for confusion if such independent evidence is also taken into account. Moreover, in addition to the four Amnaya Mathas and a well-known fifth institution at Kanchipuram, there are numerous other Mathas in India, whose traditions are at least as valid as those of the Kanchi Matha. To be really impartial, the traditions of all these other minor Mathas in India should also be taken into account, but such a study has not attracted any scholarly attentionb.

The 5th century BC date can be rejected without much discussion. It is much too early, and Shankara cannot be reasonably held to have been a contemporary of the Buddha. The only objection to this rejection of such an early date comes from those who believe that the actual date of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, should be earlier than the 9th century BC, possibly as early as the 18th century BC. Based on such an early date for the Buddha, it is argued that the possibility of a 5th century BC date for Shankara should be taken seriously.

However, all the available evidence points to the 5th century BC as the best possible period for dating the Buddha. In any case, the proponents of the 5th century BC date for Shankara also seem to forget that the evidence of Hsuan Tsang with respect to Dharmakirti is too strong to be neglected. That Shankara has quoted from Dharmakirti's work is confirmed by Suresvara. Therefore, even if the Buddha's date were to be drastically re-evaluated, and an 18th century BC date accepted, this will simply not affect Shankara's date at all. It must remain in the 8th century CE (near 750 CE, with a window of around 50 years on either side), as held by the major tradition and confirmed by internal evidence from Shankara's own works.

It must also be remembered that the 5th century BC date does not really come from any ancient tradition, notwithstanding the high-pitched rhetoric of those who claim otherwise. This date has been proposed only in the last two centuries or so, during British times. In the post-Independence period, some people champion the 5th century BC date because it helps bolster a unique kind of national pride: any great Indian should have necessarily lived before Jesus Christ! Part of this is a modern backlash against some of the early Indologists, whose belief in Biblical chronology coloured their perception of Indian history. Still, these modern proponents of the 5th century BC date perhaps forget that the date of Christ has little relevance to events in Indian history, except for fixing dates according to international convention. Surely, Shankara's greatness is not increased by an early BC date, nor is it lessened by a date much later than Christ's.

It should also be remembered that what is said to be tradition is often very misleading. The traditions of the four Mathas at Sringeri, Puri, Dvaraka and Joshimath may disagree

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about the date of Shankara, and also about who was the successor of Shankara. Notwithstanding this, the fact remains that each recognizes the other three *paramparas* to be its equal in age and origin. The *Dasanami Sannyasis* also accept affiliation only with these four Mathas. There can be no doubt that these four are the original Mathas, dating close to Shankara's times, and that all other Mathas are later ones. When traditional accounts conflict (and they do so more often than not), it is necessary to test each source for internal consistency, and then for compatibility with independent external sources.

If a Matha's claimed list of gurus is not historically verifiable, its traditions about Shankara's date and life must not be accepted uncritically. This is all the more imperative in cases where even recent personalities, who lived in the 18th and 19th centuries, are dated to impossibly early times. It is quite easy to make up a "tradition" and a list of *Mathadhipatis*, much like the royal genealogies of some of India's erstwhile kings. Any source that does not meet the criteria of internal consistency and independent external confirmation should not be accepted. This applies as much to the traditions of the powerful and influential Mathas as to those of the less well-known ones.

Dasanami Sampradaya—the Monastic Tradition

The Advaita tradition can be described in terms of two aspects-the textual/philosophical tradition of commentaries and sub-commentaries to the Vedanta works, and the religious tradition of renunciation (*samnyasa*), which is emphasized to a great deal in Shankaracharya's works. The two aspects are quite intimately related to each other-most of the notable authors in the Advaita tradition were members of the *samnyasa* tradition, and both sides of the tradition share the same values, attitudes and metaphysics. This discussion is devoted to the *samnyasa* tradition which continues to the present day.

Shankara is traditionally said to have organized the *Dasanami Sampradaya* and established four Mathas (monasteries) at *Sringeri* (in Karnataka), *Puri* (in Orissa), *Dvaraka* (in Gujarat) and *Jyotirmath* (in Uttar Pradesh). These Mathas are representative of the geography of India, with one monastery each in the eastern, southern, western and northern regions. The successive heads of these and other *Advaita Mathas* are also called Shankaracharyas, after the original founder. In fact, Shankara is often called Adi Shankaracharya, or the first Shankaracharya, in order to distinguish him from his successors.

The Dasanami Sampradaya: The Dasanami order is so called because of the ten (dasa) name (nama) suffixes which these Sannyasis adopt. These names are Bharati, Sarasvati, Sagara, Tirtha, Puri, Giri, Parvata, Aranya and Vana. These ten names are supposed to be distributed among the four Mathas. However, the affiliation is nominal at best. The *Dasanami Sannyasis* do not have to be ordained at one of the Mathas, nor do they have to reside at a Matha for any period of time. On the other hand, they are supposed to be peripatetic (*parivrajaka*-monks who constantly keep travelling), with no fixed home, except for the period of *Chaturmasya* in the rainy season, when they stay

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put at one place. The heads of the Mathas are also supposed to travel around the country for the better part of the year.

In northern India, the *Dasanami Sannyasis* are organized into a number of Akhadas-juna, Niranjani, Mahanirvani, Atal, Avahan, Ananda and Agni. Except for the Agni Akhada, which is is for Brahmacari initiates, the membership of all other Akhadas is made up of Dasanami monks. These akhadas have leaders known as mahamandalesvaras, who are usually elected during a Kumbha mela. The Kumbha mela also offers an opportunity for akhadas to initiate large numbers of new Sannyasis. The *Dasanami Sannyasis* tend to have only a nominal affiliation with their Mathas, but most maintain a closer relationship with their akhadas. Among the ten names, Aranya, Ashrama, Parvata, Vana and Sagara are quite rarely seen nowadays. All Dasanami monks belong to the tradition of *ekadandi samnyasa*. They carry a staff consisting of a single wooden stick, symbolizing the essential identity of Brahman and *Atman*.

It is important to remember that the Advaita Sampradaya is not a Shaiva sect. The fact that both the prominent non-Advaita schools of Vedanta are Vaishnava leads to a confusion among many modern researchers, who uncritically talk of all *Dasanami Sannyasis* as being Shaiva ascetics. In reality, advaitins are non-sectarian, and they advocate worship of Shiva and Vishnu equally with that of the other deities of Hinduism, like Shakti, ganapati and others. Modern neo-vedantins, who are most strongly influenced by Advaita Vedanta, have no trouble accepting Moses, Christ and Muhammad also. Philosophically, classical Advaita would disagree as much with the Shaiva siddhanta and the Shaiva Vedanta schools, as with the Vaishnava schools of Vedanta. On the other hand, the God Shiva is the archetype of the ascetic, and Advaita Vedanta lays great emphasis on samnyasa. Shaiva schools also tend to be more non-dualistic in outlook than Vaishnava schools, and Shankaracharya himself is venerated as an incarnation of Shiva. Hence, the contemporary Shankaracharyas do wield a larger degree of influence among Shaiva communities than among Vaishnava communities, but that does not necessarily make them exclusively Shaiva ascetics. The famous *Madhusudana Sarasvati* was an ardent devotee of Krishna, while Prakasananda was a Shakti-worshipper.

The major following of the gurus of the Advaita tradition has been mostly among the *smartas*, who integrate the domestic Vedic ritual with devotional aspects of Hinduism. The traditional *Pancayatana puja* scheme of smarta worship is offered to Shiva, Vishnu, Shakti, Ganesa and Surya, as aspects of saguna Brahman skanda is sometimes added as the sixth important deity who is worshipped, especially in the south. The *smartas* also regard themselves as followers of Shankaracharya and his successors at the various Mathas, but there is a lot of regional variation in this regard.

The Amnaya Mathas: The four Mathas established by Shankara are known in the tradition as the Amnaya Mathas. Shankara is said to have assigned one of the four vedas to each of these Mathas, and the Acharyas and panditas of these four Mathas continue

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the tradition to this day. Accordingly, the Puri Matha is associated with the Rg veda, Sringeri with Yajurveda, Dvaraka with sama veda and Jyotirmath with atharva veda. The ten Dasanami suffixes are distributed among these four Mathas-according to most traditions, puri, Bharati and Sarasvati with Sringeri; Tirtha and Ashrama with Dvaraka; Sagara, Parvata and Giri with Jyotirmath, and Vana and Aranya with Puri.

Many notable post-Shankaran authors, including Suresvara, Jnanaghana, Jnanottama, Anandagiri, Bharati Tirtha, Vidyaranya and others, can be found among the heads of these Mathas. Of these four, Sringeri is the only institution that has had an unbroken line of succession from Shankara. Among the other three Mathas, the succession has been interrupted at one time or the other, for a variety of historical reasons. The longest hiatus in the line of succession was in the case of Jyotirmath, where the seat lay vacant for around 165 years. In the recent past, the Sringeri Matha has been involved, directly or indirectly, in stabilizing the line of succession in the other three Mathas.

The successor to the title in a Matha is usually nominated by the presiding Shankaracharya of that Matha. It is quite normal to see Shankaracharyas who have become Sannyasis directly from the student life, without ever having been grihasthas. This is especially the norm in the Sringeri lineage. Thus, a Shankaracharya can be a very young man, sometimes barely out of his teens, when he takes charge at his Matha. On the other hand, the Puri lineage has seen many heads who have become Sannyasins quite late in their lives, after passing through the *Grihastha* stage.

In cases where a Shankaracharya passes away without nominating a successor, or if there is a dispute about the succession, the head of one of the other Mathas is consulted to resolve the issue. Within this century itself, there have been instances where the Shankaracharyas of Sringeri, Dvaraka, and Puri have been called upon to resolve succession issues in one of the other Mathas. The Sringeri lineage names thirty-six successors to the Shankaracharya title, while Dvaraka has about seventy. The Puri list of Shankaracharyas has more than 140 names to date. The larger number of names in these two lists is probably because many of the presiding Shankaracharyas have been former grihasthas, who took charge at a comparatively older age and consequently held charge for shorter periods. The line of the Jyotirmath has many gaps in it, an unfortunate circumstance of history.

The position of the Shankaracharyas in modern Hinduism has often (quite wrongly) been compared to that of the Pope in Roman Catholicism. The four Shankaracharyas do not issue catechisms for all Hindus, nor do they claim sole right to decide on doctrinal issues. SrImukhams issued by the Mathas are very different in nature from papal bulls or encyclicals, and unlike the Vatican City, the four Mathas do not enjoy sovereign status. Rather, they are governed by the federal and state laws on religious and charitable trusts and endowments in independent India, and are often answerable to governmental bodies.

However, this should not be construed to mean that the Shankaracharyas are insignificant or that their importance is overrated. They are held in high respect by almost

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all sections of Hindus, but they also tend to get blamed by the modern media, somewhat unfairly, for everything that goes wrong in Hindu society. For all that, however, the Shankaracharyas generally lead quiet, secluded lives, as befits monks, and tend to avoid media attention. There are, of course, exceptions to this norm, and recent developments in India, especially the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue, have forced all of them to take more active roles in public life.

Recent History of the Four Amnaya Mathas:

- *Sringeri: Sri "ugra" Narasimha Bharati* (1817-1878) was well-known throughout India as a very saintly personality. He travelled far and wide, and had disciples all over India and even in Sri Lanka. He was succeeded by *Sri Sacchidananda Sivabhinava Narasimha Bharati* (1878-1912), who rediscovered Kaladi, Adi Shankaracharya's birth-place, and instituted Shankara Jayanti celebrations all over India. He also arranged for the publication of a comprehensive collection of Shankara's works, and initiated the practice of having the various Shankaracharyas meet for informal discussion and decision making. Following his lead, meetings took place at Kaladi, Hardwar, Prayag, etc. His successor, *Sri Candrasekhara Bharati* (1912 to 1954), was an acclaimed *Jivanmukta*. He wrote a commentary to Shankara's *Vivekacudamani*. The first meeting of all four Shankaracharyas (*caturamnaya sammelanam*) in the 1200 year old tradition of post-Shankaran Advaita, took place at Sringeri, in 1979, under the leadership of *Sri Abhinava Vidya Tirtha* (1954-1989). *Sri Bharati* Tirtha, the presiding Shankaracharya of Sringeri, succeeded to the title in 1989. The Shankaracharyas of the four Amnaya Mathas and the head of the Kanchi Matha held another conference at Sringeri in 1993, following the events of December 1992 at Ayodhya, to express their concern at the politicization of religious issues, and resolved to lead a non-political effort to solve the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue amicably.
- *Dvaraka: Sri Trivikrama Tirtha* was the head of the Dvaraka Matha till the year 1921. He was succeeded by *Sri Bharati Krishna Tirtha*, who had a very interesting career. Beginning as a student of Vedanta at Sringeri, he became a Sannyasin under Sri Trivikrama *Tirtha* of Dvaraka, and succeeded to the Shankaracharya post at Dvaraka, in 1921. Soon after the first world war, he was prosecuted along with the Ali brothers and other Muslim leaders, by the colonial British government for treason, in connection with his involvement in the Indian Independence movement, and his support of the Khilafat movement. He is also said to have discovered some ancient sutras of basic arithmetic, which have been published as a book, under the title "Vedic mathematics". He was asked to take over the Puri Matha in 1925, when that seat fell vacant. Accordingly, *Sri Svarupananda Tirtha* and *Sri Yogesvarananda Tirtha* followed at the Dvaraka seat. In the year 1945, *Sri Abhinava Sacchidananda Tirtha* was nominated as the Shankaracharya of

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Dvaraka, with Sri Bharati Krishna *Tirtha* performing the installation ceremonies. Before taking over at Dvaraka, Sri Abhinava Sacchidananda *Tirtha* was the head of the Mulabagal Matha in Karnataka. This was an old branch of the Dvaraka Matha, established in the 17th century, and with his appointment to the Dvaraka seat, the collateral lineage of Mulabagal Matha was merged with that of Dvaraka. In later years, he was called upon to mediate the succession issues at both Puri and Jyotirmath. He also renovated the Samadhi site of Adi Shankara at Kedarnath with assistance from the government of Uttar Pradesh. He passed away in 1982, following which *Sri Svarupananda Sarasvati* of Jyotirmath assumed charge at Dvaraka. *Sri Abhinava Vidya Tirtha* of Sringeri consecrated his appointment, and Sri Svarupananda has held dual charge at both Dvaraka and Jyotirmath since then.

- *Puri:* This Matha is historically connected with the famous jagannatha temple in Puri. It is also called the Govardhana Matha, and has an important branch in Puri itself, called the Shankarananda Matha. In the beginning of the century, the head was *Sri Shankara Madhusudana Tirtha*. *Sri Bharati Krishna Tirtha*, who was then at Dvaraka, took over as the Shankaracharya of Puri in 1925. Sri Bharati Krishna *Tirtha* visited the USA in the 1950's, at the invitation of the Self-Realization Fellowship. During this time, *Sri Shankara Purushottama Tirtha* supervised the Puri Matha on his behalf. After Sri Bharati Krishna Tirtha passed away in 1960, he was succeeded by *Sri Yogesvarananda Tirtha*, whose period was quite short, as he passed away in 1961. This lead to a brief period of uncertainty during which the succession at the Matha was being litigated. In 1964, *Sri Niranjana Deva Tirtha*, who was one of the nominees named in *Sri Bharati Krishna Tirtha*'s will, was consecrated at the Puri seat by *Sri Abhinava Sacchidananda Tirtha* of Dvaraka. Sri Niranjana Deva *Tirtha* is known for his unpopular political views on volatile issues affecting Hindu people, like sati and cow protection. In 1992, he stepped down after nominating *Sri Nischalananda Sarasvati* as his successor, who is currently in charge at Puri.
- *Jyotirmath:* Also known as Joshimath, it is located near Badrinath in the Himalayas, because of which it is also known as the Badrinath Matha. After a long hiatus of 165 years, this Matha was revived in the year 1941, under *Sri Brahmananda Sarasvati*, a disciple of Sri Krishnananda Sarasvati, who was originally from Sringeri. The appointment was made by a committee of pundits from Varanasi, and Sri Brahmananda's accomplishments helped re-establish the Jyotirmath as an important centre of traditional Advaita teaching in northern India. When he passed away in 1953, Sri Santananda Sarasvati succeeded him at this seat, according to the terms of a will. However, there was a dispute regarding the capacity of Sri Santananda for the title and also about the validity of this will. This resulted in a major controversy that remains unresolved.

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Karapatri Swami (hariharananda Sarasvati), a well-known disciple of Sri Brahmananda, was asked to take over the Jyotirmath title, but he declined. To resolve the dispute, another committee of pundits from Varanasi was formed, under the guidance of karapatri Swami and Sri Abhinava Sacchidananda *Tirtha* of Dvaraka. *Sri Krishnabodhashrama* was appointed as the new head of the Matha. When he passed away in the early 1970's, he nominated *Sri Svarupananda Sarasvati*, another disciple of Sri Brahmananda, as his successor.

Sri Svarupananda continues as the Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath, and has also been in charge of Dvaraka since 1982. Some people consider the rightful succession of the Jyotirmath title to be along the disciple line of *Sri Santananda Sarasvati*. He is said to have retired in 1980, in favor of his disciple, Sri VishnudeVananda Sarasvati, who has since passed away. Sri Santananda also passed away in December 1997, and has been succeeded by *Sri Vasudevananda Sarasvati*. Thus, there are at least two separate lineages at Jyotirmath currently, although it is Sri Svarupananda Sarasvati who is endorsed by the other Amnaya Mathas.

- There is a third ascetic, named *Sri Madhavashrama*, who is another claimant to the Jyotirmath title, who contests both the claims of Sri Svarupananda and Sri Vasudevananda. Sri Madhavashrama is a disciple of *Sri Krishnabodhashrama*, who was nominated to the Jyotirmath title in the 1960's. His contention is that Sri Svarupananda cannot be accepted as the head of two different *Amnaya Mathas* (Dvaraka and Jyotirmath), so that the Jyotirmath title has to revert to another disciple of Sri Krishnabodhashrama. According to publications supporting his claim, he was anointed in 1993 or 1994, under the guidance of *Sri Niranjana Deva Tirtha*, the former Shankaracharya of Puri. Thus, the dispute between two parties for the title of Jyotirmath Shankaracharya has now become a dispute among three different parties.

Other Mathas: Other than the four Amnaya Mathas, there are a number of well-known Mathas owing allegiance to Advaita and the Shankaracharya lineage. Many of them were originally branches of one of the four Amnaya Mathas, established officially by the parent Matha, and which grew into more or less independent institutions over time. Notable among these are the branch Mathas at Kumbhakonam (now based in Kanchipuram, *Contact Address: No. 1, Salai Street, Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu 631 502, INDIA*), Sankhesvar, Kudali, Virupaksha (Hampi), Kolhapur (Karavir pitham), Sivaganga, Sakatapuram, etc.

In recent times, the Matha at Kanchipuram has been very active. Sometimes, notable Sannyasis of the Dasanami order start their own Mathas, to cater to the spiritual needs of their followers. An example is the famous *Upanishad Brahmendra* Matha at Kanchipuram, which was founded in the 18th century by Ramacandrendra Sarasvati. Sometimes, succession controversies (as in the present Jyotirmath) also leads to the establishment of separate Mathas. A few Mathas of the Nambudiri community in Kerala

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also trace their foundation to Shankara himself, as do the sumeru and Paduka Mathas in Varanasi. However, the Kavale Matha of the Gauda sarasvata community in Goa traces its origin in 740 CE not to Shankaracharya, but through another disciple of Govinda Bhagavatpada.

In general, the various Mathas in India operate quite independent of one another. The Shankaracharyas of the four original Mathas do not normally interfere with one another, nor do they seek to exercise any control, administrative or spiritual, on any of the other *Advaita Mathas* in India, unless specifically requested to do so. Although their heads are Sannyasis who lead completely detached lives, the *Advaita Mathas* are not immune to contemporary social and political pressures. Some Mathas deal with these pressures better than others. Manifestations of these pressures can be seen in the sometimes acrimonious rivalries between followers of two different Mathas, as also in the recurrent succession disputes in some of them. Such succession disputes sometimes lead to protracted litigation and the establishment of independent Mathas elsewhere.

Modern Institutions: In addition to the more traditional *Advaita Mathas* and akhadas, various Sannyasis of the Dasanami order have established some of the more well-known modern institutions, like the Ramakrishna Math and Mission (Swami Vivekananda), the Self-Realization Fellowship (Paramahamsa Yogananda), the Divine Life Society (Swami Shivananda), Yoga Vedanta Centre (Swami Vishnude Vananda), the Chinmaya Mission (Swami Chinmayananda), and others. Among these, the founders of the Ramakrishna Mission, the Divine Life Society and the Chinmaya Mission trace their spiritual descent through the Sringeri parampara.

The Self-Realization Fellowship has links to the Puri parampara. These organizations usually teach some variant or the other of Advaita Vedanta, generally combined with yoga practice, or an acceptance of the prophets of the Semitic religions, and/or an emphasis on social service. These modern institutions tend to have as much a presence in the West as in India, and their ideologies have come to be called by the generic name of neo-Vedanta. It remains to be seen whether these institutions will be the catalysts for the growth of a truly universal philosophy/religion that has been a dream of most of their founders.

There have been countless other nameless, realized masters over the centuries, who have realized the non-dual Brahman. As a living tradition of philosophy and religion, Advaita is not always restricted to *Dasanami Sannyasis* in the lineage of Shankaracharya. For example, within the 20th century CE, one has the example of the famous mystic Sri Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950), who did not formally take samnyasa, but was nevertheless a *Jivanmukta*, who taught pure Advaita.

Advaita Vedanta before Shankaracharya

There is no doubt that there was a tradition of Advaita Vedanta dating to before Shankara's times, although Shankara and his writings are of prime importance in Advaita

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Vedanta. However, Shankaracharya is regarded not as the founder of Advaita Vedanta, but only as the premier exponent of the ancient doctrine. Shankara himself salutes the teachers of the *Brahmavidya Sampradaya* in the beginning of his commentary on the brhadaranyaka Upanishad. The roots of Advaita thought have been traced back to the Rgveda samhita by one author.

Shankara's Paramaguru, (teacher's teacher) *Gaudapada*, was the author of the *Mandukya* Karikas that are attached to the *Mandukya* Upanishad. It might be difficult to consider the Upanishadic Rishis and *Badarayana*, the author of the Brahmasutras, to be advaitins, because the same Rishis are also claimed by other Vedanta traditions. Badarayana is usually identified with Vyasa, who is included in the Advaita Guru-parampara. The names given here are taken to be advaitins in the sense that the Upanishads and the Brahmasutras can be consistently interpreted according to Advaita.

With some justification, both *Uddalaka Aruni* of the chandogya Upanishad and *Yajnavalkya* of the brhadaranyaka Upanishad can be considered to be votaries of a non-dualistic/monistic philosophy. The name of Uddalaka is famous through the *sad-Vidya* section of the chandogya Upanishad. Here, Uddalaka teaches the samaveda mahavakya *tattvamasi* to his son Svetaketu, using a number of examples. Yajnavalkya is the key figure in the brhadaranyaka Upanishad. It is through his teaching that one learns the mahavakya of the Yajurveda, *aham brahmasmi*.

It is also in the course of his dialogue with his wife maitreyi, that one finds teachings of *neti, neti*, and the famous passage 'yatra tu dvaitamiva bhavati,... yatra tvasya sarvam Atmaivabhut,....'. This forms the basis for the later theory of two truths (paramartha and vyavahara) in Advaita, in which all duality is said to be in the Vyavaharika level, and is seen by the one who does not know the supreme Atmajnana. On the other hand, there is no duality for one who knows the paramartha Jnana, *i.e.* 'yatra tvasya sarvam Atmaivabhut for whom all this is indeed known to be the *Atman* itself. Although the Upanishads are not systematic expositions of a unique philosophical system, the seeds of the later philosophical systematization of Advaita Vedanta lie in the teachings of these two Upanishadic Rishis.

The Vishnu purana is in the form of a dialogue between *parasara* and his student Maitreya. The Rishi parasara also finds mention in the Advaita Guru-parampara. In this purana, the dialogue of the sage, *Rbhu* with nidagha is also recounted, where the supreme teaching of non-duality is elaborated briefly. This Rbhu Gita is also found in other puranas. Similarly, *ashtavakra* is another legendary name associated traditionally with the teaching of Advaita in the ashtavakra-Gita. These figures are thus early advaitins referred to in the puranas.

Since Shankara provides some quotes from previous writers in his tradition, we come to know of names of a few pre-Shankaran vedantins, although their works are no longer extant. Thus, *Bhagavan Upavarsha* is the author of *Vrttis* to the Brahmasutra and also

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probably the Bhagavadgita *Sundara Pandya* wrote *Varttikas* to Upavarsha's *Vrttis*, while *Brahmanandin* wrote the *chandogyopanishad-vakya*, and *Dravidacharya* wrote a *Bhashya* on Brahmanandin's *vakya*. *Kasakrtsna*, whose opinion is listed in the Brahmasutra (*avasthite-iti Kasakrtsna:*), may also be taken as a pre-Shankaran Advaita vedantin. The same name is also found in old grammatical tradition. Another very important pre-Shankaran advaitin is *Bhartrhari*, the grammarian.

He is the author of works on grammatical philosophy like the *vakyapadiya*, and a commentary on patanjali's *mahaBhashya*, the famous work on Panini's grammar. He is also credited with a collection of poems called *niti-Sataka*, *Sringara-Sataka* and *Vairagya Sataka*. Although Bhartrhari is mainly a grammarian, and his theory of *sphota-vada* is not accepted by classical Advaita Vedanta, his philosophy of grammar is explicitly based on the non-dual Brahman. Also, even with philosophical disagreements, Bhartrhari's *Vairagya-Sataka* is often quoted by later advaitins. To be sure, there were also pre-Shankaran representatives of non-Advaita Vedanta traditions, many of whom seem to have been *bhedabheda-vadins* of one kind or the other-proponents of a doctrine of identity-in-difference. Chief among them are the names of Audulomi, Asmarathya (both mentioned in the Brahmasutras), Bhartrprapancha, Brahmadatta, Bhartrmitra and Bodhayana.

Gaudapada

Gaudapada is the first historically known author in the Advaita Vedanta tradition, whose work is still available to us. He may be said to be the pioneer of the *ajati vada* school in Advaita Vedanta. Gaudapada is traditionally said to have been the guru of Govinda Bhagavatpada, who was the guru of Shankaracharya. Not much is known about Gaudapada, the person. The name Gauda indicates that he was a north Indian by birth, and many places, from Kashmir to Bengal, have been postulated as his home. The sarasvata Brahmanas of Goa and northern (coastal) Karnataka, who are said to have immigrated from north India, trace the lineage of the Kavale Matha to Gaudapada, but not through Shankaracharya. However, one branch of the sarasvata Brahmana community is affiliated to the citrapura Matha, the lineage of which is traced through Shankaracharya, while yet other (Gauda) sarasvata groups are followers of the dvaita school.

Gaudapada composed the *Gaudapadiya Karikas* (GK), which constitute an expository text on the *Mandukya* Upanishad. The GK is divided into four books (Prakaranas), titled *Agama-Prakarana*, *Vaitathya-Prakarana*, *Advaita-Prakarana* and *Alatasanti-Prakarana* respectively. The Karikas of the first book are traditionally found interspersed with the prose passages of the *Mandukya* Upanishad, while the other three books are separated from the body of the Upanishad. Other works that are attributed to Gaudapada are: *Samkhyakarika Bhashya*, *Uttaragita Bhashya*, *Nrsimhottaratapani Upanishad Bhashya*, and a couple of works on Srividya *upasana-subhagodaya* and *Srividyaratnasutra*.

There is a lot of controversy in modern critical scholarship about the identity and the philosophy of the author(s) of the GK. Thus, there is one opinion that each book is probably

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written by a different author. And there is another opinion that all books are written by the same author. One author traces connections between Gaudapada's Karikas and the later pratyabhijna school of Kashmir Saivism. From the various Vedanta schools comes another kind of controversy.

According to the Advaita school, all four Prakaranas are writings of a human author named Gaudapada, and are therefore not regarded as Shruti, even though the first Prakarana is found interspersed with the sentences of the *Mandukya* Upanishad. According to the dvaita school, however, 27 Karikas of the first Prakarana are not compositions of a human author, and are therefore as much Shruti as the prose passages of the *Mandukya* Upanishad.

The most notorious controversy about the GK is about the influence of Mahayana Buddhism on its author. Curiously enough, even those rival Vedanta schools which criticize Advaita as *Pracanna-bauddham* (Buddhism in disguise) do not quote the GK to substantiate their criticism. However, among modern scholars who are interested in studying Eastern philosophies such as Advaita Vedanta and Mahayana Buddhism, this has been a hot topic for debate.

It is clear that the GK has been written in the context of a vedantic dialogue with various schools of Mahayana Buddhism, more prominently the Yogachara and Madhyamaka schools. GK IV (*alatasanti Prakarana*) refers to the Mahayana school of Buddhism as Agrayana. Moreover, the very metaphor of the *Aiatachakra* is a peculiarly Buddhist one. The *Aiatachakra* is a burning firebrand that is waved in a circle, creating an impression of a continuous circle of fire. It is interesting to note here that Gaudapada characteristically inverts the use of the Buddhist metaphor.

The Buddhist uses the metaphor to insist that the impression of a continuous circle is an illusion, there being nothing more than the momentary spatial positions of the burning brand. Hence, from the Buddhist prespective, it is plainly an error to see the burning circle as having any *Svabhava*-"own-nature". Gaudapada on the other hand points out that the burning brand is itself the substratum of its momentary spatial positions and the illusion of a burning circle caused by waving the brand. Hence, according to him, even if the burning circle is an illusion, its *Svabhava* is nothing other than that of the burning brand.

Seen in context, the entire discussion in the GK seems to be a continuation of the age-old *Svabhava* vs. *Nihsvabhavata* and *Atman* vs. *Nairatmya* debates between vedantic and Buddhist schools. According to Shankara's commentary on these Karikas, Gaudapada uses Buddhist metaphor and Buddhist terminology to come to vedantic conclusions regarding the ultimate existence of the *Atman* = Brahman as the substratum (*Adhishthana*) of all experience. That he speaks the Buddhist language does not mean that he is a Buddhist in disguise. Moreover, it is not very surprising that Gaudapada, a vedantin, is very familiar with Buddhist doctrine. Tradition recounts that the famous Purva-Mimamsaka,

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Kumarila Bhatta, learnt from Bauddha and jaina teachers, with a view to understanding their schools before he wrote his own works on Mimamsa. Besides, by its very nature, classical Indian philosophical writing proceeds by means of demarcating one's own position from that of another's, pointing out where they are similar and on what issues they differ. An intimate knowledge of the other's philosophical system is necessary for such refutation to take place.

The contention of some modern scholars that Gaudapada's philosophy is nothing more than Buddhism clothed in vedantic colours is based on two errors, that do not do justice to either Mahayana Buddhism or to Advaita Vedanta.

- The first and the more serious error lies in interpreting the Madhyamaka concept of Sunyata as an Absolute, equivalent to the *Atman* or Brahman of Vedanta. A careful reading of nagarjuna's *mulaMadhyamaka-Karikas* and other works shows what pains the Madhyamaka school takes to avoid the extreme of absolutism (*Sasvata-vada*). While the Buddhist *Ajativada* maintains, "There is no birth," Gaudapada's argument about *Ajativada* says, "There is an Unborn." Thus, Gaudapada clearly upholds the *Atman* as the absolute. For nagarjuna, no view is correct, because every view ultimately entails some absolutist positon, an extreme that is avoided by the Buddhist middle path. Gaudapada, on the other hand, is inclusivistic in his scope. He argues that every view entails an absolutist position, and precisely for this reason, all views are said to be non-conflicting (*avirodha*) with the absolutism of Advaita.

  There are other points of contrast. For nagarjuna, there is no need to affirm a substratum (*Adhishthana*) of phenomena, whereas for Gaudapada, the *Atman* is the substratum of all experience. The Madhyamaka non-duality is in terms of the emptiness (*Sunyata*) of all phenomena, while in the Vedanta view of non-duality, phenomena are possible only due to the essential reality of the *Atman*, which is pure consciousness. The Madhyamaka school does not describe *Sunyata* as an independent absolute entity, whereas the Advaita Vedanta emphasizes Brahman/ *Atman* as an Absolute. In the light of these significant differences, seeing nothing but Mahayana Buddhism in Gaudapada's Advaita Vedanta is impossible without seeing Madhyamaka Buddhism itself through Vedanta-tinted glasses. As for the other schools of Buddhism such as Vijnanavada, the Madhyamaka school itself criticizes them for holding views that entail consciousness as an Absolute. Gaudapada possibly agrees with this evaluation of the Vijnanavada school.
- The second error lies in ignoring the fact that Advaita Vedanta no doubt developed to a substantial degree before the time of composition of GK IV. Already in the Paingala Upanishad of the Sukla Yajurveda, which Shankara quotes in his Bhashya, there is a detailed exposition of non-duality through the method of *adhyaropa-apavada*, (sublation of superimposition). With Shruti being interpreted in this way, Advaita Vedanta, with all its "illusionist" conclusions, follows very naturally: the

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ultimate reality of only the substratum is upheld, and the superimposition is denied an independent reality. Obviously, Gaudapada hails from this vedantic tradition, and in his Karikas, he addresses his contemporary mahayanists.

It is also important to remember that the development of both Mahayana Buddhism and Vedanta took place more or less simultaneously, and within the same larger geographical area. It would be foolhardy to expect that there would not have been some interaction between the two most powerful streams (Brahmana and Bauddha) of Indian philosophical thought. It is clear from the history of Indian philosophical thought that both Brahmana and Bauddha sides held steadfastly to their basic axioms, although the individual systems within each stream held diverse opinions on various philosophical issues. On the whole, it seems as if reading too much Mahayana Buddhism into the GK is jumping to conclusions. This is not a chauvinistic defense of Advaita Vedanta with respect to Buddhism. But there are many subtle points which make the two systems very different, although both systems describe Reality as being beyond name and form. It would be well to remember that the converse criticism, *i.e.* that Mahayana Buddhism is but Vedanta clothed in Buddhist colours, has been addressed by as early a Buddhist writer as Bhavaviveka (6th century CE).

It is Shankaracharya's interpretation of the source texts of Vedanta that lays the foundation for classical Advaita. It is also largely because of Shankara's composition of *Bhashyas* on the Brahmasutras, Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita, that these three have become important in all Vedanta literature as the *Prasthana-trayi*.

The following *Bhashyas* (commentaries) are his principal compositions:

1. Upanishad (Shruti Prasthana) *Bhashyas* on
   - Aitareya Upanishad
   - Brhadaranyaka Upanishad
   - ISa Upanishad
   - Taittiriya Upanishad
   - Katha Upanishad
   - Chandogya Upanishad
   - Kena Upanishad
   - Mundaka Upanishad
   - Prasna Upanishad
   - Mandukya Upanishad and Karikas
2. Bhagavadgita (Smriti Prasthana) Bhashya,
3. Brahmasutra (Nyaya Prasthana) Bhashya.

In addition to the Upanishads in the list above, Shankaracharya also quotes the kaushitaki, Svetasvatara, Mahanarayana, Jabala, Paingala and a few other Upanishads

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in his Brahmasutra Bhashya. There are *Bhashyas* on Svetasvatara, kaushitaki and Narsimhatapani Upanishads, the attribution of which is doubtful.

Shankara is also said to have written texts in other Indian philosophical traditions. There are texts on yoga, like the *Yogasutra Bhashya Vivarana* and a commentary on the *Adhyatma patala* of the Apastamba dharmasutras, and commentaries on the *Vishnu Sahasranama* and *Lalita trisati*. A Samkhya work called *Jayamangala* and a Nyaya work called *Sthirasiddhi* are also attributed to him.

A large number of Advaita treatises, called *Prakarana Granthas*, are also usually attributed to Shankara. There is doubt within modern critical scholarship, regarding the authorship of these works. It is possible that works of later advaitins have been assumed to be those of Shankara himself, as his successors in the various Mathas have also come to be called Shankaracharyas. However, the living Advaita tradition itself views the *Prakarana Granthas* as Shankara's own compositions. These works are often used to teach beginners. The important ones are:

1. Upadesasahasri
2. Atmabodha
3. Aparokshanubhuti
4. Dasasioki
5. Satasioki
6. Vivekacudamani
7. Vakyavrtti
8. Panchikaraaa

Other such compositions include *Svatmanirupanam*, *Tattvabodha*, *Ekasloki*, *Yogataravali*, *Svarupanusandhanam*, *Atmapanchakam* and *Prapanchasara*. A few stotrams (hymns) are also attributed to Shankara. These range from the famous *Bhaja Govindam* hymn to the *Dakshinamurti Stotram*. There is a large number of sub-commentaries to Shankara's works, called *Tikas*, *Tippanis*, *Varttikas* and *Dipikas*, which will be noticed in the section on post-Shankaran advaitins.

Mandana Misra

According to tradition, Mandana Misra was originally a Purva Mimamsaka, who debated with Shankara, and lost. He is then said to have become a disciple of Shankara, and taken the name Suresvara.

A number of works on grammar (Vyakarana-*sphotasiddhi*) and vedic exegesis (*Purva Mimamsa-vidhiviveka*, *BhaVanaviveka* and *Mimamsanukramanika*) have been written by Mandana Misra. He is also the author of *Vibhramaviveka*, a treatise on theories of error, in which he refers both to the "*Anyathakhyati*" theory of Purva Mimamsa and the "*Anirvacaniyakhyaai*" theory of Advaita. Moreover, although he is traditionally held to

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be a disciple of *Kumarila Bhatta*, the most famous Purva Mimamsaka, Mandana clearly holds non-dualistic philosophical views in *Vidhiviveka* and *Sphotasiddhi*. Mandana also severely criticizes kumarila's Mimamsa theory of language in the *Sphotasiddhi*, and following Bhartrhari, he upholds the non-duality of *Sabda-Brahman*.

Mandana misra's treatise on Advaita, the *Brahmasiddhi*, consists of four chapters, containing both prose and verse sections. He shows a sharp knowledge of the crucial aspects of all the systems which he refutes in the *Brahmasiddhi*, including Nyaya-vaiseshika, Purva Mimamsa, Bauddha and jaina schools and other Vedanta schools. He is arguably the first among a galaxy of advaitin scholars who made substantial contributions to other schools of Indian philosophy. There are a number of commentaries to the *Brahmasiddhi*, including *Brahmasiddhi-Tika* by Sankhapani, *Abhipraya-Prakasika* by Chitsukha, and *Bhavasuddhi* by Anandapurna vidyasagara. It is said that Vachaspati Misra's *Tattva Samiksha*, which is not available now, was a commentary on the *Brahmasiddhi*.

The traditional identification of Mandana Misra with Suresvara has been doubted in the modern literature. Much can be said on both sides of this issue. It has been pointed out that Mandana Misra and Shankara are most probably contemporaries, and that Mandana must have known of Shankara's philosophical views when he wrote the *Brahmasiddhi*. Many themes are common to both Mandana and Shankara, *e.g.* that the reality of the universe lasts only until liberation, which is nothing more or nothing less than realizing the true nature (*Svarupa*) of the *Atman*; and that the Jiva is really Brahman, but appears to be different by false knowledge and limiting adjuncts.

Perhaps this similarity is to be expected, because these are some of the cardinal principles of Advaita, and any advaitin of note would necessarily follow these lines. There does seem to be some contrast between Mandana and Shankara on some other issues. Mandana shows a tendency to accommodate what is known as *"Jnanakarma-samuchayavada"*-a combined path of Jnana and Karma to achieve liberation. On the other hand, Shankara is uncompromising in emphasizing Jnana and denying that Karma can directly lead to liberation, except for its role in *Cittasuddhi*, *i.e.* as a means of purification. And Suresvara's independent work is titled *Naishkarmyasiddhi*-the achievement of the state of the absence of Karma. Mandana and Suresvara also differ on the question of the locus of avidya.

Mandana holds that the avidya rests on the Jiva, and has Brahman for its object. Suresvara maintains that avidya both rests on Brahman and has Brahman for its object. This difference in view about the nature and locus of avidya is also seen in post-Shankaran Advaita. Vachaspati Misra takes the same view as Mandana does, and authors in the Bhamati sub-school expand their views along these lines. However, the Vivarana writers mostly follow Suresvara's line of reasoning, and hold that Brahman is both the locus and object of avidya. Many contemporary scholars think that this difference of opinion is a

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late, post-Shankaran development. In this connection, it is important to remember that Mandana was a contemporary of Shankara, so that this difference of opinion indeed has an old history.

Did Mandana Misra, the author of *Brahmasiddhi*, write several treatises on Purva Mimamsa earlier? If so, did Mandana, the Purva Mimamsaka, change his philosophical views later in his life to become Mandana, the vedantin? Is Mandana, the Purva Mimamsaka, the same as Mandana, the vedantin? Or are they different people? Finally, is Mandana the same as Suresvara? Such questions will probably never be answered to everybody's satisfaction. It is interesting to note in this connection that, in the post-Shankaran Advaita literature, the names Suresvara and Visvarupa are used interchangeably to refer to the *Varttikakara*, while Mandana, the author of the *Brahmasiddhi*, is usually referred to only as the *Brahmasiddhikara*. However, many traditional hagiographies, including the *Madhaviya Shankara-vijaya*, identify the two.

Shankaracharya's Disciples

Suresvara is the most prolific writer among Shankara's immediate disciples. His Advaita writings include *Varttikas* on Shankaracharya's *Brhadaranyakopanishad Bhashya* and *Taittiriyopanishad Bhashya*, *Naishkarmyasiddhi*, an independent exposition of Advaita, and minor works like *Panchikaraaa Varttika*, *Manasollasa*, a commentary on Shankara's *Dakshinamurti Stotram*. Other works include *Balakrida*, *Svarajya Siddhi* and *Kasimoksha Vichara*. Tradition also identifies Suresvara with Mandana Misra, and with Visvarupa, a disciple of *Kumarila Bhatta*. Shankara is said to have gone to visvarupa's home in order to debate with him. The debate ended in Shankara's triumph, and Visvarupa became a Sannyasi disciple of Shankara, under the name of Suresvara. If this identification is correct, then numerous other works on Purva Mimamsa, Vyakarana and other subjects are also the work of the same person.

According to tradition, Suresvara composed the *Taittiriyopanishad Bhashya Varttika* in honour of Shankara, his guru, who belonged to the Taittiriya Sakha of the Krishna Yajurveda. Since he himself belonged to the Kanva Sakha of the Sukla Yajurveda, he next wrote the *Brhadaranyakopanishad Bhashya Varttika*, with an introduction known as *Sambandha Varttika*. The *Naishkarmyasiddhi* was composed before he wrote these two *Upanishad Bhashya Varttikas*. The *Naishkarmyasiddhi* has attracted the attention of many later commentators, including Jnanottama Misra, who wrote the *Chandrika*, Chitsukha, who wrote *Bhava Tattva Prakasika*, Jnanamrta, who wrote *Vidyasurabhi* and Ramadatta, the author of *Sarartha*. Suresvara was installed as Shankara's successor at the southern Advaita Matha at Sringeri. An old Samadhi at Sringeri is traditionally identified as the site where Suresvara was buried. Another tradition connects him with the western Advaita Matha at Dvaraka.

Padmapada is the author of the *Panchapadika*, a commentary on Shankara's *Brahmasutra Bhashya*. There are a few traditions current about him. His name was

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originally Sanandana, and like his guru, he hailed from southern India. The story goes that while learning with Shankara at Kashi, he was once on the opposite bank of the ganga, when he heard Shankara call out his name. Oblivious to the fact that there was a wide river between him and his guru, he started walking across it, and the river miraculously supported his step by sprouting lotus flowers (padma) under his feet, as he crossed it. Hence he was given the name Padmapada.

Padmapada is said to have once written a complete commentary to Shankara's *Brahmasutra Bhashya*. However, his original manuscript was lost in a fire orchestrated by a jealous uncle of his. He had read out the portion of his work dealing with the first five padas of the Brahmasutras once before to Shankara. On learning of the loss of the original manuscript, Shankara dictated this portion back to him from memory. Hence the work came to be known as the *Panchapadika*. This story is recounted in some of the *Shankaravijayam* texts. In any case, the extant work titled *Panchapadika* ends abruptly after elaborating on Shankara's *Bhashya* upto the fourth sutra. Padmapada is said to have succeeded Shankara at the eastern Matha at Puri. The *Panchapadika* has a commentary named Vivarana, by prakasatman, which forms the basis for the later *Vivarana* school of Advaita Vedanta. Other works attributed to Padmapada include *Vijnana Dipika*, *Atmanatmaviveka*, and a commentary on Shankara's *Atmabodha*, titled *Vedantasara*. Padmapada is associated with the puri Matha as the first guru after Shankara.

Totaka is the author of two works, Totakashtakam and *Srutisarasamuddharana*, both in the delightful toTaka meter. The tradition about him is that he was originally a quiet student named Giri, who did not impress Shankara's other students as being very scholarly. However, Shankara would not begin his regular class without his being present. The other students once asked Shankara to begin, without waiting for Giri to finish his other chores. In order to teach them Giri's true worth, Shankara is said to have caused him to understand the deepest truths in a moment's insight. Giri returned singing the praises of his guru in the Totakashtakam, stunning the other students, who had not believed him to be capable of scholarly composition. He was thereafter known as Totakacharya. He also wrote the *Srutisarasamuddharana* set to the same meter. An *Atmanatmavivekavidhi* is also said to be his composition. Totakacharya is traditionally said to have been Shankara's successor at the northern Matha at Jyotirmath near badrinath. Totakacharya is sometimes wrongly identified in some modern literature with Anandagiri. totaka was a direct disciple of Shankaracharya, while Anandagiri, who wrote many sub-commentaries to Shankara's works, was a disciple of Suddhananda, and he lived much later, in the 13th century CE.

Hastamalaka is known mainly through a poem called the *Hastamalakiya Sloka*. According to the Madhaviya Shankaravijayam, Hastamalaka's parents lived in a village called Sribali, near gokarna (Karnataka). He was born already Self-realized. His behaviour as a child caused his parents a lot of concern, because the young boy would remain dumb and completely unaffected by happenings around him. The troubled parents brought him to Shankara, who asked him who he was. The boy replied in verse, describing his essential

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nature as the non-dual *Atman*. Shankara realized that this seemingly dumb boy was actually like the vedic Rishi Vamadeva, and asked the parents to leave the boy with him as a Sannyasin, who was then called Hastamalaka. This name comes from a well-known metaphor.

The words Hastamalaka and Karatala-Amalaka are often used in Advaita writings, when the immediate knowledge of the *Atman* is said to be grasped as if it were the gooseberry (Amalaka) fruit in one's hand (hasta). As such, the name Hastamalaka denotes this disciple's depth of Atmajnana. His dialogue with Shankara came to be known as the *Hastamalakiya Sloka*. Some of Shankara's disciples felt that such an accomplished master as Hastamalaka would be the ideal candidate to write sub-commentaries to Shankara's *Bhashyas*. However, Shankara did not want to ask him to descend from his height of non-dualistic *Brahmanubhava*, even to write commentaries to his own works, and asked Suresvara and Padmapada to write them instead. Another work called *Vivekamanjari* is attributed to Hastamalaka, who is said to have been appointed at the western Advaita Matha at Dvaraka, under the guardianship of Suresvara.

Post-Shankaran Advaitins-an Overview

- Jnanaghana, Jnanottama, etc.
- Vachaspati Misra and the Bhamati school
- prakasatman and the Vivarana school
- sarvajnatman and Vimuktatman
- Sriharsha
- Chitsukha and others in the 13th century CE
- Anandagiri
- Bharatitirtha, Vidyaranya and Shankarananda
- Sadananda yogindra
- Prakasananda Sarasvati
- Narsimhashrama and his disciples
- appayya Dikshita and others
- Madhusudana Sarasvati, the great Krishna bhakta
- Sadasiva Brahmendra, Upanishad Brahmendra
- Advaita authors in this century

A large number of teachers and writers have left their impression upon the Advaita tradition during the 12 centuries after Shankaracharya. This text mentions only the seminal figures in the history of post-Shankaran Advaita. True to the Advaita spirit of not identifying with the body, our writers rarely give any clues to personal details in their texts. Consequently, all dates mentioned here rely upon the academic research that has been done within the last two centuries. Traditional details are mentioned where necessary,

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and it is important to remember that some historical details are still being disputed in the literature.

A list of post-Shankaran authors in Advaita will have to include both Sannyasins and householders. Moreover, some householder authors took the vows of sannyasa at a later stage in their lives, which means that some authors are known by more than one name (*e.g.* Janardana-Anandagiri). A general rule of thumb is that an author whose last name is *Misra*, or a variant of *upadhyaya*, or *Dikshita* is a householder, while the names of Sannyasins are indicated by Dasanami suffixes.

However, there are some early Sannyasin authors whose Dasanami suffixes are not known, such as *Jnanaghana* (grand-disciple of Suresvara, and author of *Tattvasuddhi*), his disciple, *Jnanottama* (the author of *Vidyasri*), Vimuktatman, Chitsukha, sukhaprakasa, amalananda and others. In these cases, that they were Sannyasins is known by the terms muni, yati, yogi, etc. used by later commentators. The Sannyasin authors were generally associated with the four Mathas established by Shankara and the other Mathas established later. Thus, Jnanaghana and Jnanottama are found on the succession list of the Sringeri Matha and Anandagiri is found on the list of the Dvaraka Matha. Meanwhile, the householder scholars formed the communities in which the Sannyasins were born, and from which the *Mathadhipatis* were chosen.

The name of *Vachaspati Misra* (9th century CE) stands out among the early post-Shankaran authors in the Advaita tradition. His commentary, named *Bhamati*, on Shankaracharya's *Brahmasutra Bhashya*, is celebrated, and has given birth to a sub-tradition within Advaita, called the Bhamati school. Many commentaries to *Bhamati* have been written in the course of the centuries. Vachaspati Misra is said to have written a commentary named *Tattva samiksha* to Mandana misra's *Brahmasiddhi*, which is now unfortunately lost to us. He is also well-known as a scholar who wrote authoritative treatises in various Indian philosophical traditions, including Nyaya-vaiseshika (*Nyayasucinibandha* and *tatparyatika*), yoga (*tattvavaisaradi*), Mimamsa (*Nyayakanika*) and Samkhya (*tattvakaumudi*), in addition to Advaita Vedanta. His erudition made him famous as a *sarvatantra-svatantra*, a title of high respect in India.

The next important author from the 10th century CE is *prakasatman*, who wrote the *Vivarana* to Padmapada's *Panchapadika*. This work has also received a long line of commentaries from later authors, and lends its name to the other important sub-tradition in Advaita Vedanta, namely the Vivarana school. prakasatman also wrote the *Sabdanirnaya* and the *Nyayamuktavali*, a commentary on the Brahmasutras. *sarvajnatman*, the author of *samkshepa-Sariraka*, *pancaprakriya* and *pramana-lakshana* is another notable 10th century author. sarvajnatman salutes his guru *devesvara* in his works.

The name devesvara is usually seen as a synonym of Suresvara, Shankara's disciple, and on this basis, sarvajnatman is sometimes identified with *nityabodhaghana*. However, in the *pramana-lakshana*, sarvajnatman mentions the name of devesvara's guru as

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deVananda, whose guru was Sreshthananda. Hence, there is some confusion over whether sarvajnatman was a direct disciple of Suresvara or not.

Sarvajnatman was probably a younger contemporary of *Vimuktatman*, the author of *ishtasiddhi*. One author named Jnanottama, who lived in the 12th century CE, wrote the *Chandrika* on Suresvara's *Naishkarmyasiddhi*, and a *Vivarana* to the Vimuktatman's *ishtasiddhi*. This Jnanottama lived in the region of Tanjavur in Tamil Nadu. His full name in the manuscripts is *Jnanottama Misra mahopadhyaya*, which indicates that unlike the Jnanottama mentioned earlier, he was a householder scholar. There is some evidence from the last verse of the *Chandrika* that this author later became a Sannyasin by name *sarvajnashrama*.

Between the 9th and 13th centuries, Shankaracharya's exposition of Advaita came under attack by rival vedantin teachers, such as bhaskara (*bhedabheda*), Ramanuja (*Visishtadvaita*), nimbarka (*dvaitadvaita*), and Ananda*Tirtha* (*dvaita*). There was also a resurgence of Nyaya-vaiseshika philosophy around the same time, culminating in the fully developed Navya-Nyaya school of later times. After this period, all later authors in the Advaita tradition concentrate on addressing issues raised by philosophers from Nyaya, and rival schools of Vedanta. This is in contrast with the early authors whose major concerns were with the tenets of the Samkhya, Mahayana buddhists and the Purva mimamsakas.

Sriharsha, who wrote the *khandana-khanda-khadya*, is an important author in the history of Advaita Vedanta. He mainly addresses the Nyaya school, and points out fallacies in their definitions of various concepts. Such criticisms lead to a later reworking of the Nyaya system, which soon lost its earlier naive realism. After Sriharsha's time, logical formalism took centre stage, culminating in the highly formal logical system of the *Navya-Nyaya* (new logic) school. The *khandana-khanda-khadya* was commented upon both by advaitins and naiyyayikas. Sriharsha is also famous as the author of the *Naishada-Charita*, which relates the puranic story of nala and damayanti. He is known for using extremely difficult grammatical constructions in the samskrta language, and constructing sentences using words in such a way as to yield multiple meanings. For example, the word *Yagesvara* can be split as *Yaganam Ishvara:*, the lord of sacrifices, or as *ya agesvara:*, the lord of mountains, and both meanings are significant in the same sentence. Sriharsha's work has been commented upon by many later advaitins, and also by authors in the Nyaya-vaiseshika tradition.

Chitsukha, a disciple of *Jnanottama*, wrote a number of works, including commentaries on the *khandana-khandakhadya*, *Brahmasiddhi* and *Naishkarmyasiddhi*. His *tattvapradipika* is more famously known as *citsukhi*. Like Sriharsha before him, Chitsukha also makes effective use of the dialectical method seen in the works of nagarjuna, the Buddhist philosopher. Both acknowledge this fact, but criticize the Madhyamaka school for not affirming the ultimate reality of Brahman. *Anandabodha*, *Anandanubhava*, *akhandananda* and *Anubhutisvarupacharya* are other important authors in the 13th

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century *sukhaprakasa*, a disciple of Chitsukha, wrote commentaries on Anandabodha's and Anubhutisvarupa's works. *amalananda*, a disciple of *sukhaprakasa*, wrote the *vedantakalpataru* on the Bhamati and also a *Panchapadika-darpana*, thus forming an early link between the Bhamati and Vivarana schools.

Anandagiri (also known as *Anandajnana*), a disciple of *Suddhananda*, is well-known as the author of a number of *Tikas* and *Tippanas* on Shankaracharya's *Upanishad Bhashyas*. *Anubhutisvarupa*, mentioned earlier, was an important figure in the *sarasvata* grammatical tradition, and was probably another guru of Anandagiri's. He wrote the *prakatartha-Vivarana* on Shankara's *BrahmasutraBhashya* and a *Mandukya-karika-Bhashya*. Both Suddhananda and Anandagiri are mentioned in the lineage of the Dvaraka Matha. Anandagiri is popularly known as the *Tikakara*. His *tarka sangraha* is a refutation of the vaiseshika categories, and is a very popular text in the tradition. Anandagiri is probably identical with *Janardana*, the author of *vedantatattvaloka*. Anandagiri is often mistakenly identified with Totakacharya, an immediate disciple of Shankaracharya. The *Shankara-vijaya* of Anantanandagiri, a much later author, is also mistakenly attributed to Anandagiri. Needless to say, both identifications are erroneous.

By far the most important authors in the 14th century are *Shankarananda*, *Bharati Tirtha* and Vidyaranya. Together, the latter two wrote a number of definitive works, including the *Adhikarana ratnamaia* (also called *vaiyasika Nyayamala*), *Panchadasi*, *jivanmuktiviveka*, *anubhutiprakasa* and *Vivaranaprameyasangraha*. Both authors were from the Sringeri lineage, and were disciples of *vidyaTirtha* (also called *vidyaShankara*), as attested by the evidence of the *anubhutiprakasa*. Vidyaranya is traditionally known to be the guiding spirit behind the founders of the Vijayanagar empire in southern India. That Vidyaranya and Bharati *Tirtha* wrote together is mentioned by their direct disciple, *ramaKrishna Bharati*, who wrote the *Panchadasi-tatparyabodhini*.

In the Panchadasi, Vidyaranya mentions *Shankarananda* as another guru of his. This Shankarananda was a disciple of *Atmananda*, and he wrote many *dipikas* on the Upanishads belonging to the Atharvaveda. He also wrote the *Atmapurana* and the *Bhagavad-Gita-tatparyabodhini*. He is said to have been a native of Tiruvidaimarudur in Tamil Nadu, and is also associated with the holy places Srisailam and Ahobilam in Andhra Pradesh. His name is also found in the lineages of a few branch Mathas of the Sringeri and Puri Mathas. Vidyaranya is normally identified in modern literature with a Madhava, but the identification remains controversial. The *Madhaviya Shankaravijaya* is traditionally attributed to Vidyaranya. The *sarvadarsana-sangraha*, which is a compendium of Indian philosophical thought, presents the tenets of the major contemporary schools of thought in a hierarchical fashion, with Advaita Vedanta as the ultimate truth.

There are many authors from the 14th and 15th centuries CE. The growth of the Vijayanagar empire and its vassal states in southern India was a crucial factor in the preservation and transmission of all Indian religious and philosophical traditions. Beginning with the sons of sangama, the founders of the Vijayanagar empire, the kings of the first

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dynasty identified closely with Advaita Vedanta and regarded the Shankaracharyas of the Sringeri Matha as their gurus. A *Brahmasutravrtti* is even attributed to *praudhadevaraya*, one of the early Vijayanagar kings. The later dynasties which ruled the Vijayanagar empire were predominantly Vaishnava, but the kings encouraged and patronized teachers from all sects and faiths, including Muslims. All aspects of traditional Indian culture found patronage in the empire. Among the texts written in the 15th century, the *Vedantasara* of *Sadananda yogindra* enjoys great popularity. It is often used as an introductory text in the Advaita tradition. Sadananda also wrote the *vedantasiddhanta-sarasangraha*, *bhavaprakasa* on the Gita and the *Brahmasutra-tatparyaprakasa*.

In the 16th century, *Prakasananda sarasvati*'s *vedantasiddhanta-muktavali*, and *siddhantadipa*, a commentary on this work by *nana Dikshita*, represent a move away from the influential Bhamati and Vivarana sub-schools. These two authors argue for the *drshti-srshti vada*, but not many other works are found along this line. Prakasananda also wrote a few works in the Sakta tradition, such as *tarabhakti tarangini*. This work is also not very widely known, although the worship of saguna Brahman in the form of the Goddess has been intimately connected with the Advaita Vedanta tradition, since ancient times.

Maharshi Kapila

Maharishi Kapila is a Vedic sage traditionally considered to be the original proponent of the *Samkhya* system of philosophy but there are no known writings by him that deal with the *Samkhya* system as it is understood today. He is described as an incarnation of Vishnu within the Puranas, famous for teaching a process of liberation known as bhakti yoga.

History: Very little historical data is known for sure regarding Maharishi Kapila's life. He is said to have lived in the Indian subcontinent, some say around 500 BC, other accounts give much earlier dates. Tradition has it that Shakyamuni Buddha studied the Samkhya system before his "awakening," putting Kapila's birth at least before that time. He is also mentioned by Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita as the greatest of all perfected beings which could possibly move the date back further still:

> *Of all trees I am the banyan tree, and of the sages among the demigods I am Narada. Of the Gandharvas I am Citraratha, and among perfected beings I am the sage Kapila.* *(Bhagavad Gita 10.26)*

His parents are given in the Bhagavata Purana as Kardama Muni and Devahuti. After his father left home, Kapila instructed his mother Devahuti in the philosophy of yoga and worship of Lord Vishnu, enabling her to achieve both liberation (moksha), and pure love of God.

Teachings: Kapiladev's teachings are quoted exstensively within the Srimad Bhagavatam especially:

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"My appearance in this world is especially to explain the philosophy of Sankhya, which is highly esteemed for self-realization by those desiring freedom from the entanglement of unnecessary material desires. This path of self-realization, which is difficult to understand, has now been lost in the course of time. Please know that I have assumed this body of Kapila to introduce and explain this philosophy to human society again."

"When one is completely cleansed of the impurities of lust and greed produced from the false identification of the body as "I" and bodily possessions as "mine," one's mind becomes purified. In that pure state he transcends the stage of so-called material happiness and distress."

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead is the Supreme Soul, and He has no beginning. He is transcendental to the material modes of nature and beyond the existence of this material world. He is perceivable everywhere because He is self-effulgent, and by His self-effulgent luster the entire creation is maintained."

"The glory of the Lord is always worth singing, for His glories enhance the glories of His devotees. One should therefore meditate upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead and upon His devotees. One should meditate on the eternal form of the Lord until the mind becomes fixed."

Birth of the Ganges: Maharshi Kapila is a major figure in the story associated with the Hindu holiday of Makar Sankranti, about bringing down Ganga Ganges River from heaven, which involves King Sagar of Ayodhya, an ancestor of Rama. King Sagara had performed the Aswamedha sacrifice ninety-nine times. Each time a horse was sent around the earth Indra the King of the Heaven grew jealous and kidnapped the horse, hiding it in the hermitage of Kapila Muni during the hundredth sacrifice.

The 60,000 sons of Sagara found the horse, and believing Kapila to be the abductor assaulted him. Kapila turned the assailants to ashes. Anshuman, a grandson of King Sagara (Son of Asamanjas the Wicked son of King Sagara), came to Kapila begging him to redeem the souls of the 60 000. Kapila replied that only if the Ganges descended from heaven and touched the ashes of the 60 000 would they be redeemed.

Gautama

Gautama (c. 2nd–3rd century) was an Indian philosopher and logician who wrote the Nyya Sutras, considered to be the foundation of the Nyya school of philosophy.

Gautama's precise dates are uncertain. In the past he has been assigned to various times between the sixth and third centuries BC, though most modern scholars place him between the second and third centuries CE. His name has occasionally led him to be confused with Gautama Buddha. He is sometimes given the honourific titles "Akapda"

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("eye-footed") and "Dirghatapas" ("long-penance"). He is also sometimes accorded the religious titles "Rishi" or "Maharshi".

In the *Nyya Sutras* Gautama developed and extended the Vakeika epistemological and metaphysical system through 528 aphorisms. Later commentaries expanded, expounded, and critically discussed Gautama's work, the first being by Vatsyyana (c.450–500 CE), followed by the *Nyyavrttika* of Uddyotakra (c. 6th–7th century), Vchaspati Misra's *Ttparyat+k* (9th century), Udayana's *Ttparyaparíluddhi* (10th century), and Jayanta's *Nyyamanjar+* (10th century). These not only discussed Gautama's thought, but also that of his successors.

Ramanujacharya

Chief exponent of the Vishishtadvaita school of Vedanta and a great social reformer. "If I can bring deliverance to so many, I do not mind being condemned to hell," he said, and spread his spiritual message to even the lowliest of classes of people. He established the Yatiraja Math and the Cheluva Narayana Swami temple at Melkote in Karnataka, and also renovated many ancient temples. He wrote many philosophical works and preached the oneness of mankind.

The worshippers of Vishnu are 'Vaishnavas'. They devoutly worship Sri Rama and Sri Krishna, the incarnations of Vishnu. 'Sri' is Lakshmi. The devotees worship Mother Lakshmi and through her they try to propitiate Lord Vishnu. These devotees are the Srivaishnavas and they follow the tenets of *Vishishtadvaita*.

It was the Alwars, the Vaishnava devotees of Tamilnadu, who widely popularized the Srivaishnava religion. They lived between the sixth and the ninth centuries of the Christian era. They were twelve in number. They did not have any caste distinctions. These Vaishnava devotees were drawn from all castes of the Hindu religion. Today all of them are worshipped by the Srivaishnavas.

The tradition of the Acharyas began after the Alwars. 'Acharya' means a teacher. Among them Yamunacharya was foremost. The next in succession was Ramanujacharya. It was he who provided a good framework to the Bhakti cult. He gave a comprehensive form to the tenets of Vishishtadvaita. He propounded a philosophy, which could command a universal following.

Childhood, Marriage: Yamunacharya was also called Alawandar'. Srishailapurna was his disciple. The latter had two sisters, the elder of whom was Bhudevi. She was the wife of Asuri Keshavacharya, also called Keshava Perumal. Bhudevi and Keshavacharya lived in a temple at Sri Perambudur, about thirty miles away from Madras. Ramanuja, their only son, was born in A.D. 1017. Sridevi was Shailapurana's younger sister. She was the wife of Kusumanayana Bhatta. A boy called Govinda was born of this couple exactly at the same time as Ramanuja was born. These two continued to live in amity till the end of their life, and had great mutual affection.

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Ramanuja was a bright child. Since he resembled Sri Rama's brother ('anuja') Lakshmana, he was called Ramanuja or Rama's brother.

The boy Ramanuja was very smart. If he read or listened to his lessons even once, he could always remember them. Naturally the teachers came to like him. They were very fond of him. He learnt the Vedas and the Vedangas even as a child.

He had his sacred thread ceremony at the right time. When Ramanuja was about sixteen years old he married a girl called Rakshambal who appears to have been known also as Tanjamma. After a few days, his father Keshavacharya died. This caused bitter sorrow to Ramanuja. With his wife and mother he left for Kanchipuram and settled there. Govinda followed them to Kanchipuram.

Extraordinary Disciple: Ramanuja had not yet received all his lessons in Vedanta. He was on the lookout for the right 'guru'. Yadavapraksha was one of the greatest scholars of those days. Ramanuja became his student.

Though he became a student, he did not relish the manner in which the teacher taught him. It would of course be wrong to find fault with one's teacher. But in Ramanuja's judgement, Yadavaprakasha was not explaining the texts properly. Ramanuja was in a dilemma.

One day the teacher was explaining some intricate sentence in the Chandogya Upanishad. The meaning of the passage as given by the teacher was rather crude. Ramanuja gave his own interpretation of the line. The teacher resented that the student had the temerity to debate a point with the teacher. He was even nervous that some day his student might steal a march over him. It happened that on another day, they were discussing a line in Taittiriya Upanishad. The teacher gave a faulty explanation. Ramanuja explained the line in his own way. The teacher should have felt happy with his student who had given such a brilliant exposition. Instead he became angry with him.

"Look here. If you are not satisfied with my way of teaching, you don't have to take any more lessons." The teacher spoke with obvious displeasure. Ramanuja went away without uttering a word. He was too full of respect for his teacher.

Who Saved Him?: His fellow students hated Ramanuja and wanted to get rid of him. The teacher and the students including Govinda and Ramanuja were all going on a pilgrimage to Varanasi. They approached the Vindhya Mountains. They were travelling through an impenetrable jungle when Yadava Prakasha and his other disciples hatched a plot to kill Ramanuja, Govinda somehow sensed it; he warned his brother and advised him to run for his life. Accordingly Ramanuja went away. The teacher and the other students frantically searched for him in the forest. They presumed that he had been killed by some wild animal and they proceeded on their way to Varanasi.

Ramanuja wandered wildly in the forest. He was tormented by hunger and thirst. There was also the fear of the wild animals. He prayed to God and slept under a tree.

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It was already nightfall when he awoke. He was not feeling hunger and thirst any longer. However it was not easy to find his way out from the wild forest.

Just then a man and a woman appeared on the scene. They were a hunter-couple. They felt sad when they heard the boy's tale of woe. Since they were also heading south, Ramanuja followed them.

It was already dark when they emerged from the jungle. They found a suitable place in the plain and rested for the night. Some time after midnight, the hunter's wife said she was thirsty. Ramanuja got up and went in search of water. He fetched water from a far-off pond. The hunter's wife, after drinking it, asked for some more. When Ramanuja went back to the pond for more water, it was already daybreak. Ramanuja surprised to find himself in the midst of familiar surroundings-temple towers, coconut trees and woods. He had unconsciously come back to Kanchipuram.

He wondered how he had managed to come all the way here from the Vindhyas, and that in a single night. It must be the will of the Almighty, he thought. He then guessed that the hunter-couple who had accompanied him were none other than Lord Narayana and his consort Lakshmi.

He rushed back to the, place where the hunter-couple had stayed. They were no longer there. Ramanuja was profoundly grateful to God. From that day onwards he made it a custom to carry water from the pond for the worship of God Varadaraja. Ramanuja took upon himself the responsibility of carrying the holy water every day.

Back to the Old Guru: Yadavaprakasha and his disciples returned to Kanchi from Varanasi. They feared that their evil designs had come to light. They were dismayed to find that Ramanuja had come back safely. But Ramanuja remained unperturbed and explained the divine intercession, which had enabled him to return to Kanchi in one night. The guru told Ramanuja to come back to him for continuing his lessons. Ramanuja's studentship was thus resumed.

The Lamp of the Future: In those days Yamunacharya was the leader of the Vishishtadvaita School. He had authored many learned works in Sanskrit on that school of philosophy. Mighty contributions yet remained to be made for the development of its tenets, but Yamunacharya was becoming very old. He was wondering who would continue the great tradition. He was then living in Sriranga. He had devoted himself to the worship of Lord Ranganatha. He used to hear now and then about Ramanuja. Once he happened to come to Kanchi. He saw Ramanuja when the latter was going in a crowd, and was much pleased. Ramanuja was tall, handsome and well built. He thought that Ramanuja was the right man for the task of guiding the Vishishtadvaita School. He prayed to God Varadaraja Swami that Ramanuja would be the successor. That day was not far off.

"Get Out!": Ramanuja's guru continued to nurse his ill feeling towards his disciple. One day the teacher was explaining the Upanishadic line-Sarvam khalvidam brahma (God is everywhere). The explanation did not appeal to Ramanuja. He gave his own explanation.

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The teacher grew angry and told him unequivocally that he would not teach him any longer. Ramanuja was sad. He thenceforward spent all his time in the service of Lord Varadaraja.

"I Shall Fulfil Your Aspirations": Yamunacharya came to know that Ramanuja had been estranged from Yadavaprakasha. His own end was drawing near. He told his student Mahapoorna to fetch Ramanuja from Kanchi. However, Yamuna died even before Ramanuja arrived.

Mahapoorna travelled day and night and reached Kanchi. He was fascinated by the magnificent personality of Ramanuja.

He explained to Ramanuja the condition of Yamunacharya. Ramanuja longed to see the great man. They came to Sriranga. They saw a crowd on the banks of the river Cauvery. People had assembled there for the funeral rites of the great Yamuna. Ramanuja was shocked. But he felt comforted that he was fortunate to see at least the dead body of the great man.

A miracle happened then. Ramanuja stood before the corpse and gazed at it. He observed that the three fingers of the right hand had been bent. He was told by disciples of the guru that the latter had left unfinished three important tasks in his life. Ramanuja took an oath that he would accomplish them. He vowed that he would propagate the Srivaishnava philosophy, that he would pay his tribute to Vyasa, Parashara and Nammalwar, and that he would write a commentary on Vyasa's Brahma Sutras. Even as he declared his vows, the three fingers of Yamunacharya got straightened one by one. It was clear that Sri Yamuna had blessed Ramanuja. It was also clear that Ramanuja would be the future torchbearer of the Srivaishnava tradition.

Learned Husband, Ignorant Wife: Ramanuja did not believe in the caste system. He disliked superstitions. The sage Kanchipoorna was a devotee of Lord Varadaraja. He was known to be a great man. He was not a brahmin. But Ramanuja accepted him as his guru and he used to prostrate before him. The guru had forbidden Ramanuja to greet him. But Ramanuja persisted since he always considered himself a disciple of Kanchipoorna.

It happened that once Ramanuja invited sage Kanchipoorna to a dinner at his house. He wanted to feed him and receive his blessings. The sage accepted the invitation and dinner was arranged. The sage knew that Ramanuia's wife was a very orthodox woman. So, he went to their house when Ramanuja was away to fetch the distinguished guest. Kanchipoorna dined at Ramanuja's house aid returned. Ramanuja's wife gave away the remaining food to some others; she cleaned the house, bathed and cooked fresh food for the family.

Ramanuja came back and realized what had happened. He was angry that his wife had denied him the opportunity of receiving the blessings of the guru. Her narrow-mindedness disgusted him. She was incapable of understanding the noble feelings of Ramanuja, the great man who had taken birth for the welfare of mankind.

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On another occasion a group of hungry people came to his doors. Ramanuja asked his wife to see if she could find some food in the house for them. She replied that there was no food to offer. Ramanuja became furious when he later came to know that she had told a lie.

Ramanuja Becomes "Yatiraja": Whenever Ramanuja wanted solutions to any philosophical questions, he would refer them to Kanchipoorna. The latter would often find it difficult to answer the questions, since Ramanuja himself was a profound scholar. On such occasions he stood before the deify and appealed for answers. He conveyed back to Ramanuja the response he received from god. Ramanuja was most happy with the answers. These became the basic tenets of Vishishtadvaita.

Ramanuja left for Sriranga to meet his prospective guru Mahapoorna. At the same time Mahapoorna and his wife were on the way to Kanchi to persuade Ramanuja to take up the task left uncompleted by Yamunacharya. Their paths crossed and they both met on the way. Mahapoorna agreed to Ramanuja's guru. Ramanuja was taken to a place near a bakula tree, and after the preliminary rituals he was taught the philosophical intricacies of Vishishtadvaita. Ramanuja took his guru to Kanchi and kept him with him there.

For nearly six months Ramanuja served his master and learnt from him the inner esoteric meaning of the 'Nalayira' (four thousand) Prabandha compositions. He learnt the essence of Vishishtadvaita contained in those hymns.

Mahapoorna was not a brahmin. One day his wife was drawing water from the well, and inadvertently a few drops were splashed on the pitcher of Ramanuja's wife. The latter became angry that she had been polluted and started a row. Mahapoorna felt deeply hurt by her conduct. He decided to leave the place lest his presence create further estrangement between Ramanuja and his wife, and proceeded to Sriranga. Ramanuja came to know that his guru had left. His anger knew no bounds. How could he continue to live with such a wife? He cleverly dispatched her to her father's house and took to Sannyasa in the presence of Lord Varadaraja. Ramanuja thus became Yatriraja. His worldly bonds had been severed forever.

To Sriranga: The news of Ramanuja's becoming a Sannyasi spread everywhere. People came to see him in large numbers. Many were attracted by his brilliant personality and became his disciples. Among them were Ramanuja's nephew Dasarathi and Kooresha. His old guru Yadavaprakasha had by then repented for his past follies. When he came to know that a vast number of people went to call on Ramanuja, he too joined them. He met Ramanuja and he too was happy. Kooresha was able to find answers to many of the philosophical questions which were vexing Yadava-prakasha. He was thus converted into Srivaishnava faith and then onwards assumed the name 'Govinda Jeer'.

Although Ramanuja had no dearth of disciples, he felt the need of his brother Govinda. He was therefore brought to Kanchi from Kalahasti.

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The disciples of Yamunacharya at Sriranga continued to think of Ramanuja. They sent their chief Vararanga in order to fetch Ramanuja to Sriranga. They propitiated the God at Sriranga and succeeded in taking Ramanuja to Sriranga.

Though Ramanuja preached hisphilosophy daily he felt that his knowledge was still incomplete. Therefore he once again approached Mahapoorna and learnt quite a few things from him. But ' Mahapoorna said: "There is a man called Goshtipoorna in Goshtipura, he is the only man who can further teach you the significance of Srivaishnava tenets."

"What if I Go to Hell?": Goshtipoora did not easily accord his benediction to Ramanuja. He was bent on testing the latter's fitness and devotion.

He often evaded Ramanuja saying he was busy and refused to meet him. At last he was convinced that Ramanuja was a deserving student. He told Ramanuja to approach him with his walking stick and Kamandalu. Ramanuja came accompanied by Dasarathi and Kooresha. "I told you to come alone. Why did you bring these two with you?" the guru asked. Ramanuja said: "Dasarathi is my walking stick and Kooresha is the Kamandalu. I just cannot survive without them." Goshtipoorna was deeply touched by Ramanuja's affection for his disciples.

He taught Ramanuja the significance of the 'ashtakshari' hymn: "Since those who recite it will find god realization, you should be discriminating while teaching it," he said.

But Ramanuja did not like such invidious distinctions between man and man. He wanted that every one should profit by such divine knowledge.

Next day he climbed the temple tower and summoned all the residents of the town. He spread broadcast to them all the mystical knowledge he had learnt. He made them repeat the hymn and then explained the meaning. People were elated with joy.

Goshtipoorna was wrathful when he heard all this. He asked Ramanuja if ever he knew what punishment would befall him for the crime he had committed. Ramanuja spoke calmly: I know I may have to go to hell for having defied my Guru. My action has brought happiness and deliverance to so many and hence it does not matter even if I am condemned to everlasting perdition."

The words brought wisdom to Goshtipoorna. He realized that Ramanuja was a great man who had taken his birth only for the deliverance of the world. He called him 'My Lord and embraced him.

The Perfect Guru: The teachings of Yamunacharya had been distributed among his five disciples, namely Kanchipoorna, Mahapoorna, Goshtipoorna, Maladhara, and Vararanga. Ramanuja had received instruction at the hands of three of them. He was yet to meet the remaining two' He went to Maladhara to learn the hymns of Nammalwar.

Maladhara was also known as Tirumalai Andan. Ramanuja sat at his feet to learn. The guru explained Nammalwar's 'Tiruvaimoli' in the light of the interpretation he had heard from the lips of Yamunacharya. But Ramanuja tried to read even richer meaning

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into those songs. Maladhara was displeased. Goshtipoora also came to know of it, and tried to mollify the feelings of Maladhara. He assured him that Ramanuja was a great genius who had received the grace of his guru Yamunacharya, and therefore the teacher should continue his lessons unmindful of the incidental irritation. Later Ramanuja received lessons for Vararanga on the Nalayira hymns.

The philosophical tenets of Yamunacharya which had remained fragmented were gathered together from various sources and codified by Ramanuja. Ramanuja thus became Paripoora ('complete') and his probation was over. He was in a position to disseminate the essentials of Srivaishnava religion among his contemporaries. He wrote the three classics called Gadya-traya, Nitya-grantha and Gita-Bhashya. He exercised all his faculties in obtaining divine grace and sharing the fruits of his experience with his fellowmen.

Opposition: After Ramanuja came to Sriranga, the stranglehold of the priests was released. But they felt frustrated and were waiting for a chance to avenge them by killing him. One day when Ramanuja was on his usual rounds to collect the day's alms, he was standing before the doorsteps of a house. The lady of the house came out to offer him alms. As soon as she saw the unusually brilliant eyes and graceful saintly face of the Sannyasi, she began to shiver with fright. When Ramanuja asked her the reason for her strange conduct, she could not help confessing the truth before the great man. She had been instigated by her husband and his friends to poison the food that was to be offered to the Sannyasi. Ramanuja threw the food into the river.

When the disciples came to know what had happened, they decided to cook the food themselves thereafter.

There lived a famous scholar called Yajnamurthy. He had defeated many opponents in philosophical disputes. He was a very insolent man, too. He came to Ramanuja in order to challenge him to a dispute. He came to Sriranga with cartloads of ancient tomes and a crowd of disciples. The arguments went on for eighteen days. It was a meeting of two equals. On the nineteenth day Ramanuja presented a line of argument based on Yamunacharya's works. The proud controversialist was humbled, and later he became a favourite disciple of Ramanuja. He became known as Devarajamuni.

Two Students: Thus Ramanuja's reputation extended far and wide. He wanted to visit holy places. Accompanied by his students he visited the places where once the 'Alwars' lived and he came to a village called Ashtasahasragrama. There he had two disciples- Yajnesha, a rich man, and Varadarya, a poor man. Ramanuja and his disciples visited the house of Varadarya for collecting alms for the day. They were cordially welcomed by the lady of the house. But there was little that the poor woman could offer to the guests. But Ramanuja admired her devotion. The other disciple was rich but somewhat insolent. He waited in vain for his guru the whole day. He realized his folly and went to his teacher. He fell at his feet and apologised. Ramanuja exhorted him to treat all living creatures with equal humanity.

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Then Ramanuja went up the Tirupati Hills to offer worship to Lord Srinivasa. At the foot of the hills he spent nearly a year studying Ramayana under the guidance of Srishailapoorna.

The Great Commentator: It was then that Ramanuja remembered he had not fulfilled one of the promises he had made to his departed guru Yamuna. He was yet to write a commentary on the Brahma Sutras of Vyasa. He needed to consult the learned commentary written by Bodhayana, the immediate disciple of Vedavyasa. But that great work was in Kashmir. Ramanuja and his disciple Kooresha went on foot all the way to Kashmir. The King and his court-scholars were astounded by Ramanuja's profound knowledge. Ramanuja begged them to give him the work of Bodhayana. But the scholars refused. They did not even permit him to make a copy of the text. "At least, please let me glance through the work once," he begged of them.

It was a very difficult text, and the scholars thought that there would be no harm if they allowed Ramanuja to merely thumb through the pages of the book. Kooresha read it aloud from cover to cover, and the teacher listened in silence. Kooresha understood his master's predicament. He had a prodigious memory and he was able to make a copy of the whole book by a mere cursory glance at it. The happy guru and his disciple returned to Sriranga. And then began the composition of SriBhashya, the commentary on Bramha Sutras. The guru dictated and the disciple wrote it down. Whenever doubts occurred he would stop and listen. Thus the writing went on.

At one point the disciple grew a little uncertain about the meaning of a passage, and he paused. Seeing that Kooresha had stopped writing down, the teacher became angry; he abruptly got up and went out.

But he soon realized his mistake and apologized to his student. He had clearly made a mistake and if the student had mechanically continued the writing, a serious mistake would have crept into the commentary.

Thus the SriBhashya was concluded and Ramanuja came to be called 'Sri Bhashyakara.' The students of Ramanuja wanted what their teacher's mission should also include visits to pilgrim centres. The teacher agreed and they went on foot all the way. They toured the Chola and Pandya kingdoms and went to North India. They visited distant holy places like Dwaraka and Badari and reached Kashmir. Then the Goddess of learning Sri Sharda appeared before him and blessed him by presenting an icon of Hayagreeva. Later he visited Varanasi. At Puri he established the Ambar Math. He reorganized the temple service at Jagannath. He toured all over India and returned to Sriranga.

To Karnataka: Karikala was the ruler of the Chola kingdom. He was a worshipper of Shiva, and he was a fanatic. He wanted to force Ramanuja to accept his religion. He issued a proclamation saying 'There is no god greater than Shiva' and someone suggested that the king should get Ramanuja to subscribe to that view. He sent for him. When the king's emissaries arrived at Sriranga, Ramanuja was taking his bath. Sensing the imminent

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danger to the master, Kooresha disguised himself as Ramanuja. Ramanuja came to know of what had transpired from Dasarathi, and was thus able to escape. He decided to leave Sriranga. He crossed the Cauvery River and arrived in Karnataka.

The disciples of Ramanuja had to bear the brunt of the tyrant's wrath. Kooresha and Mahapoorna were taken to a jungle and their eyes where gouged out. Mahapoorna died in agony. Kooresha settled in a small remote village.

On arriving in Karnataka Ramanuja reached Saligrama. The serene atmosphere of the place appealed to him. Vaduhanambi, the priest of the local Narasimha temple, became Ramanuja's disciple. The people of the vicinity, on learning that Ramanuja had arrived at the village, gathered round him. There is pond in that village and it is a kind of memorial to the great man. Even today Sripada *Tirtha* is considered to be sacred to all Srivaishnavas. The temple is still in charge of the descendants of the family of Vaduhanambi.

Bitti Deva: Ramanuja travelled eastward and came to Tondanur, the second capital of the Hoysala Empire. Bitti Deva (Vittala Devaraya) was the name of the Hoysala ruler. His daughter was suffering from a mental illness. Ramanuja by now had become famous as the man who cured the illness of the Chola princess. When the king sent for Ramanuja, he did not go at first. But when a disciple, Tondanurunambi, assured him that the Hoysala king was not a fanatical tyrant like the Chola king, Ramanuja agreed to go. He cured the illness of the princess, to the delight of the king. He was drawn to Ramanuja's faith and became a Srivaishnava.

He then onwards came to be known as Vishnu-vardhana. In memory of this great event, the king built five Vaishnava temples Channiganarayana temple at Belur, Nambinarayana temple at Tondanur, Kirtinarayana temple at Talakad, Veeranarayana temple at Gadag and ChaluVanarayana temple at Melkote. These temples are lasting monuments of Karnataka culture and architecture. Ramanuja built many other temples too in Tondanur. He also got constructed a huge reservoir called 'Tirumalasagara' (now called Moti Talab).

He left Tondanur for Melkote, which was also known as Tirunarayanapura or Yadavagiri. It was a hilly area overgrown with a thick jungle. The original idol of god Tirunarayana was lying hidden in a mole-hill. Ramanuja got it dug out and installed the idol in a specially built shrine.

There is a beautiful legend about the Utsavamoorti of this temple. (Utsavamoorti is a small idol of the same deity used for taking out in procession.)

Formerly the temple did not have the idol, which is meant for being taken out in procession. It was said that the idol was in the custody of a Muslim king. When Ramanuja went to see the Sultan, the Sultan was impressed by Ramanuja's magnificent personality. He had no objection to parting with the idol if his daughter also agreed. It is said Ramanuja called aloud-"Come, my king Selvapillay' and the idol came dancing to Ramanuja. The

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Sultan's daughter would not easily part with the idol, since she loved it dearly, and she followed it when it was taken out to Melkote. It is said that when she could not get back the idol, she put an end to her life at the feet of the deity.

The Harijans ware of great help to Ramanuja in building the shrines and in accomplishing other public utility works in Melkote. Ramanuja called them 'Tirukulattar' ('high-born'). He arranged to have them admitted to the temple on three days in a year, when they could have free darshan of the deity.

Last Days: Ramanuja lived in Karnataka for twenty years. He established the Yatiraja Math in Melkote, and also several other Maths and temples. He had succeeded in spreading the tenets of Srivaishnava religion in Melkote. He wanted to return to Sriranga to complete his task there. He remembered his former disciples, Kooresha, Dhanurdasa and others. Much work remained to be done. The fanatical Chola king was no more and his successor was more tolerant towards other faiths. Time was thus propitious for returning and Ramanuja came to Sriranga, after bidding farewell to associates at Melkote.

Ramanuja's old acquaintances were electrified with new zest when Ramanuja was back among them. He was deeply moved to see the blinded old man Kooresha who passed away some time later. Ramanuja renovated many old temples, which were in ruins. He was by now a ripe old man of 120 years. His eyes turned Heavenward since he had fulfilled all that he wanted to achieve. He decided to cast of his mortal frame. A life-size statue of his was made. Ramanuja breathed life into it before he passed away. The life like statue was installed in Sri Perambudur. Ramanuja delivered his final message to his disciples: "Shed your ego. Love the devotees of God. Serve the cause of mankind who is God's children. Nobody is infallible; do not humiliate any one. What is of supreme importance is purity of mind and deed." His message was spread all over the country by his seventy-four disciples and Maths was built in different parts. The end was nearing. Ramanuja lay down keeping his head on the lap of Govinda and his feet on Andhrapoorna's lap. He attained eternal bliss in that posture, on the tenth day of the month of Magha, in the year 1059 of Shalivahana era (A. D. 1137).

Ramanuja particularly laid stress on the merciful nature of God. God possesses numerous attributes like truth, grace and beauty. If we worship God devotedly, he will bless us. We should not make much of personal happiness. Those who love God are the real great men irrespective of their caste or religion. Ramanuja loved all mankind without making any distinction between man and man. He taught his disciples the virtues of humility and equality.

Madhvacharya

Madhvacharya (1238-1317) was the chief proponent of Tattvavda (True Philosophy), popularly known as Dvaita or dualistic school of Hindu philosophy. It is one of the three

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most influential Vedanta philosophies. Madhva was one of the important philosophers during the Bhakti movement. He was a pioneer in many ways, going against standard conventions and norms. Madhvacharya is believed by his followers to be the third incarnation of Vayu, Aka Mukhyaprana, after Hanuman and Bhima.

Formative Years: *Shri Madhvacharya* was the incarnation of Mukhyaprana and was born as *Vaasudeva* to Madhyageha Bhatta (father) and Vedavati (mother) at Pajaka in Udupi, Karnataka.

Ontology: The basic tenet of Madhva philosophy is the existence of two kinds of realities, namely "Independent reality" (or svatantra tatva) and "Dependent reality" (or *asvatantra tatva*).

- *Independent reality* (*svatantra*)-who/which we refer to as "God". 5 generic names are applicable to God (as per *shreemad bhaagavata mahaapuraan*). They are "Brahman", "para Brahman", "aatman", "paramaatman" and "bhagavaan". It is to be noted that by "Brahman", aacharya madhva does not mean "chaturmukha brahma". The word "Brahman" refers to "Brihat" (meaning "big"), *i.e.*, the one who/which is the biggest in this universe which, is none other than "God".

  In general, aachaarya madhva's important message is that every word, every sound in this entire universe only means God which he equated with Vishnu.

  According to Madhva, only Brahman is independent in every sense of the word.
- *Dependent reality* (asvatantra)-plurality of Jivas and Prakriti or Nature. Both the Jivas and Nature are dependent on Brahman for their very "being" and "becoming". This dependence is expressed metaphorically as *Bimba-pratibimba* (source-reflection) relation. The reflection is in everyway dependent on the source that gets reflected.

Madhva's Credo: Madhva was motivated by his four convictions.

1. A determination to remain true to experience above everything.
2. A commitment to sound reasoning.
3. A fervent devotion to a personal God (Vishnu) that drove all his actions.
4. Fearless tenacity in expounding his vision in the most hostile environments.

Philosophy of Realism: Dvaita school belongs to the Realist school of Indian philosophy, in the same category as Samkhya, Nyaya, Vaisheshika and Purva Mimamsa schools. They believe that the universe is a real creation of Brahman. The plurality of souls are bound by a "real" bondage due to beginningless ignorance, and sadhana through Vishnu bhakti is the only way to be released from this bondage. Further, Madhva explains that Jnana or knowledge alone is not sufficient for the release from beginningless avidya or ignorance, since this bondage is sustained by the "Will" of Brahman and so needs Vishnu Prasadam, *i.e.*, God's grace to ultimately break the bonds of My.

Five Differences: Dvaita, or Dualistic philosophy (known severally as Bheda-vada, Tattva-vada, and Bimba-pratibimba-vada), asserts that the difference between the

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individual soul or Jiva, and God, (Ishvara or Vishnu), is eternal and real. Actually, this is just one of the five differences that are so stated—all five differences that constitute the universe are eternal.

The five are given by:

jiiveshvara bheda chaiva jadeshvara bheda tatha
jiiva-bhedo mithashchaiva jada-jiiva-bheda tatha
mithashcha jada-bhedo.ayam prapajncho bheda-panchakah.

—paramashruti

"The difference between the Jiva (soul) and Ishvara (Creator), and the difference between Jada (insentient) and Ishvara; and the difference between various jivas, and the difference between jada and Jiva; and the difference between various jadas, these five differences make up the universe." From the *Paramopanishad* a.k.a. Paramashruti, as quoted by Ananda *Tirtha* in his *'Vishnu-Tattva-vinirnaya'*.

Another way of saying this is that these five fundamental real differences are between: Selves and Brahman; matter and Brahman; one Self and another Self; matter and Selves; and, matter and matter.

Contrary to the Idealistic schools like Yogachara, Madhyamika Buddhism or Advaita, Dvaita maintains that difference is in the very nature of a substance. This is the reason why some refer to the doctrine of Tattvavada (the preferred name) as 'Dvaita'. However, 'Dvaita' is thought to be inadequately representative of the true grain of *Tattvavada*.

The doctrine of Tattvavada is considered to be eternal (in a flow-like sense, just as Creation is eternal); in historical times, it was revived by Ananda *Tirtha*, who is also known as Madhvacharya. Because of this, followers of Tattvavada are called Madhvas, meaning followers of Madhva.

Avatars (as believed) of Shri Madhvacharya. From top (in order of occurrence): Hanuman, Bhima and Shri Madhvacharya.

Souls are not created by God.

- Madhvacharya has established that souls are eternal, and are not created by God as in the Semitic religions. The souls are dependent, not generated by Vishnu but co-exist with Him eternally, supported by His will and entirely controlled by Him. The souls, however, are dependent on Him in their pristine nature and in all transformation that they may undergo.

Three Classes of Souls and Eternal Damnation

- Additionally, Madhvacharya differed significantly from traditional Hindu beliefs in his concept of eternal damnation. For example, he divides souls into three classes, one class which qualify for liberation, Mukti-yogyas, another subject to eternal rebirth or eternally transmigrating due to samsara, Nitya-samsarins, and

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significantly, a class that is eventually condemned to eternal hell or Andhatamas, known as Tamo-yogyas.

Madhva followers cite authorities such as Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 17, verses 2 et seq. "There are three types of inclination, which are the self-same natures of the souls, these being satvika, rajasa, and tamasa," Chapter 16, verses 19-20, "These cruel haters, worst among men in the world, I hurl these evil-doers into the wombs of demons only. Entering into demoniacal wombs and deluded, birth after birth, not attaining me, they thus fall, Oh Arjuna, into a condition still lower than that," for their concept of eternal damnation. Madhvacharaya was the second after Ramanuja in the recent years who revived the timeless Vaishnava tradition. There were 21 different Bashayas (commenteries) before Srimadhvacharaya. He is the first to establish the facts of tri-patriate classification of souls. By contrast, most Hindus believe that souls will eventually obtain moksha, even after millions of rebirths.

Madhvacharya's Theology as an Answer to the Eternal Problem of Evil

- By following the concepts of souls not being created by God and classification of the souls, Madhvacharya provides a lucid answer to the problem of evil by seeking a root cause like the intrinsic nature of the soul itself. Often, evil behaviour displayed in the world might not be just the nature of the soul but also depends upon the timeless actions (Karma) of the soul itself.

Interpretation of the Caste System

- Madhva interprets the concept of Varna mentioned in the Vedas (Purusha Sooktha) as not being defined by birth, but by the nature of a Soul. For example a Soul having the nature of a Brahmin could have been born as a Shudra and vice versa. The caste system decided by birth is actually Jaati and not Varna. The Varnas simply define the disposition of the Soul, for example a Soul classified as Brahmana Varna is disposed towards learning, a Kshatriya Soul is dispose towards administration and a Shudra Soul is disploed towards performing Service.

Impact of Dvaita Movement

- Madhva's Dualistic view, along with Shankara's Advaita or Non-dualism and Ramanuja's Qualified Nondualism, or Vishishtadvaita form some core Indian beliefs on the nature of reality.
- Madhva is considered to be one of the influential theologians in Hindu history. He revitalized an Hindu monotheism in light of attacks, theological and physical, by foreign invasion. Great leaders of the Vaishnava Bhakti movement, in Karnataka, for example, Purandara Dasa and Kanaka Dasa were part of the Dvaita traditions. Also, the famous Hindu saint, Raghavendra Swami, was a leading figure in the Dvaita tradition.

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Madhvacharaya during his time not only established dvaita philosophy, but also displayed extraordinary strength and skills to show that he is the third avatara of Vayu, who came down to earth to help people suffering from delusional philosophies and guide them in the right path. Madhvacharaya at the age of 79, year 1317, disappeared from the eyes of humans and continue to reside in Upper Badari in his continuning service to his eternal master Sri Vedavyasa.

Narayana Panditacharya captures Madhvacharaya's life in a beautiful poetic verses in his "Shri Madhva Vijaya" which is in 16 Sarga (chapters), this book is an authentic work composed during his own time. This is a very rare work, there is no evidence of anyone composing works on any major philosopher like this before or after him from other disciplines. "Shri Madhva Vijaya" is a composition which captures life history of Madhvacharaya.

Religious Establishments: The main icon (vigraha) in Udupi of Lord Krishna was established by Madhvacharya. The 8 monasteries (ashta Mathas) of Udupi have been following his philosophy since then.

Icon of Lord Krishna in Udupi installed by Shri Madhvacharya: The Eight monastries (Ashta Matha's) are Krishnapura, Pejavara, Putthige, Sode (Sondhe), Kaniyoor (Kaneyur), Adamaru, Shirur, Palimaru.

Comparison to Mainstream Hinduism: The teachings of Sri Madhvacharya were in many ways quite radical for his times. One example is his doctrine of eternal damnation. This idea which is prevalent in Abrahamic religions, is generally not endorsed by most schools of Hindu philosophy. But Dvaita scholars argue that Madhva has derived these concepts from within the Vedic framework. There are many instances in the Upanishads and Gita that support Sri Madhva's position. They also argue that since the knowledge of whether a Jiva is *Muktiyogya* (liberation-worthy) or *Tamoyogya* (damnation-worthy) is not accessible to the Jiva himself, this philosophy does not discourage sadhana for anyone.

Names and Avatars

Names

- Vasudeva, as named by his parents.
- Poornaprajnya or "One who knows everything", named after attaining sainthood.
- Anandateertha, or "One who brings bliss through his preachings".
- Shri Madhvacharya. This name is not given to him by anyone but it comes from the vedas. There is a hymn in the vedas called "balitthaa sookta" where the term "madhva" has been used to refer to "mukhya praana".

Claimed Avatars

- Hanuman.

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- Bhima Madhvaachaarya declared, in his work "*Vishnu-tatva-vinirnaya:*" that he was the one who took the avatars of Hanuman and Bhima. Significantly, the only other person who openly makes such a declaration about his original form is Sri Krishna, (in Bhagavad-gita).

Vedanta Desika

Vedanta Desika (1269–1370) is the second greatest Sri Vaishnavist writer. He was a great poet, devotee, philosopher and master-teacher. Ramanuja's death in 1137 A.D. was followed by a sectarian split among the Sri Vaishnavas. By the end of the 14th century this turned into a permanent division into two sects: Vadakalai (Northern learning) and Tenkalai (Southern learning). The followers of the former consider Sri Vedanta Desika as their *Acharya* (teacher). The followers of the latter consider Sri Manavala Maamunikal as their *Acharya*.

Life: Swami was born in Thoopul, near Kanchipuram, on the order of Lord Srinivasa and Padmavathi Thayaar of Tirupati, as a son of Ananta Suri and Totaramba. He was named "Venkatanatha". Educated and trained by a scholarly maternal uncle of his, Kidambi Appullalar (who was a direct disciple of Ramanuja), who was also his Acharya, initiated his *Upanayanam* at the age of seven and made him master the Vedas, Divyaprabandam, Puranas and Sastras. By the age of twenty he was a Great Scholar without par in the history of Vaishnavism. The wedding ceremony was celebrated when "Venakatanathan" turned 21 with Tirumangai (also known as "Kanakavalli"). The Lord blessed him with a son, who was named "Varadarya" in 1317 A.D. Swami rose to the status of an "Acharya" by the age of 27.

Hayagriva Mantra: Tradition regards Vedanta Desikan as the incarnation of the *ghanta* (=Bell) of the Lord of Tirupati. On initiation of "Garuda Mantram" by his Guru, Swami went to Thiruvaheendrapuram and was on penance, chanting the same, when Garuda appeared before him and taught him the "Hayagriva Mantra". Lord Hayagriva appeared before him and presented an Idol of Himself to Swami Desikan. It is for this reason that, almost in all Desikan temples, there will be an Idol of Hayagriva, adjacent to him.

Works: His writings include devotional works on deities and Acharyas, treatises on Vishishtadvaita, commentary on the Gita, secret doctrines of Vaishnavism (Rahasyathrayam), original Tamil poems, epic poems and allegorical dramas in Sanskrit, dialectical works directed against rival schools, treatises on practical daily life and several other miscellaneous treatises. His gloss on the meanings of the Vedas, reconciling the teachings of the Alwars and the Prasthana-traya created history because it brought to the Divya Prabhandham of the Alwars a status equivalent to the Vedas.

"Sudarshnashtakam" on Lord Sudarshana (Chakrathazhwar), a poetic bliss and his "Hayagriva Stotram" on Hayagriva (The God of Education) are his most famous works.

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He composed other Sthothrams which are almost 50 in number on different Gods in various occasions. Some of them are: Godha Sthuthi, Nyaya Dasakam, Bhu Sthuthi, Kamasikashtakam and Raghuveera Gadhyam.

Desika's Writings: His poems contain an incisive clarity of appeal that is instructive to the seeker as well as enjoyable by the connoisieur. The devotional fervour is all transparent and infectious. Every work of his is full of beautiful poetry, superb devotion, conceptual density, philosophy, mythology, poetic gymnastics, lilting rhyme and majesty of language.

The Eight-lettered Mantra: In talking about the eight-lettered mantra (Ashtaksharam) of Narayana, he mentions several things which can also have an eight-fold classification – like, eight kinds of devotion, eight siddhis, eight functions of the intellect and so on. In the same strain he talks of eight flowers for the worship of God; these are: Non-violence; sense-control; universal compassion; infinite patience; wisdom; austerity; meditation; and truth.

Transcendence and Immanence of God: His explanations of the Transcendence and Immanence of God are illuminating. Transcendence (*bahir-vyapti*) means: He is there even where Matter and Spirit are not there. Immanence (*antar-vyapti*) means: He is inherent in Matter and Spirit in such a way that you can never say He is not there.

Prapatti: When he explains the theory of surrender (*prapatti*) he analyses the situation of man's sins vanishing after the surrender of Man. The sins acquired before surrender vanish at the point of surrender. Afterwards, sins done because of inevitability will not accrue to the doer. Sins done involuntarily or unconsciously certainly will not accrue to him. On the other hand, sins done consciously, in the sense they were not inevitable, will vanish in the following manner: one-fourth of them by a proper remorse; one-fourth by a determination not to repeat the sin; one-fourth by a preparation to do the regretful ritual (*prayshcitta*) and the last one-fourth by the actual doing of that ritual! Keeping in abeyance with this concept of "Prapatti", the Vadakalai sect of Iyengars, follow it till this day, on the divine guidance of their respective Acharya.

Paduka-Sahasram: *Paduka (pronounced 'paadukaa') Sahasram* means one thousand verses on the sandals, is in praise of the sacred sandals of Lord Sri Ranganatha's lotus feet at Srirangam. The whole work is a monument for supreme devotion and superb poetry, all in one night's intuition, an overnight miracle of one thousand verses. It was composed by him on request of the learned scholars of Srirangam realising that there was no strong Shloka on Sri Ranaganatha Swamy at Srirangam. All this was composed by Desika (as he puts it, by the Grace of the Paduka of the Divine) in just one quarter of the night, actually the third quarter.

The earlier two quarters were devoted by him, as soon as he accepted the commitment, to *yoga* and *yoganidra* (=sleep induced by yoga and resulting in intuition). The wonder of this work is the ability of Acharya to compose 1000 verses on just the lotus feet of Lord

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Ranganatha and that too in different ways, ultimately capturing the interest of the audience.

Eulogy of Divine Sandals: The spirit of the Paduka-sahasram is unequalled in any religious literature. The Paduka of the divine is equal to the guru or the Acharya whose grace is more powerful than the grace of the Lord. The Acharya implied in every verse of the Paduka sahasram is Nammalvar, the great author of Tiru-vai-mozhi, who is generally considered as the Paduka of the divine. Here are a few examples of this unusual eulogy.

Peruml and Zachri: The Tamil word Perumal (pronounced 'Perumaal') is used by Vaishnava tradition to denote the Supreme Divinity as well as the idol—arca—of the Divine. The two words which compose to make perumal are perum, which means 'the great' 'the gigantic' 'the supreme' and 'aal' which means 'personality'. The corresponding Sanskrit word is 'Purushottama'. The sandals of Perumal are known as the Zachri. The Zachri is like a crown placed reverentially on the heads of devotees in all Vaishnava temples, and they receive it with humility, with one hand on the mouth as if to keep it shut.

Desika's Depiction of Bharata receiving the Paduka: The classic instance of this act was first done by Bharata (in the Ramayana) when he received the sandals of Lord Rama. But before he receives it, he requests the Lord to wear the sandals once and remove it. The act of Rama that is requested here is to step on the sandals and step down. This drama does not find a place in either the Tamil Ramayana of Kamban or the Hindi Ramayana of Tulsi. But the original poet Valmiki describes it. 'Oh Lord', says Bharata, 'Please step on these sandals and step down. These sandals are the ones which support and sustain the welfare of the three worlds'. And Rama obliges. Imagine this scene in your mind.

What does it mean? Does it have an esoteric significance? The obvious significance that suggests itself to us is that Rama is requested to step on the sandals and step out so that the sandals may receive the spiritual vibrations from the Lord and therefore become sacred so as to be venerated and be able to receive the honour of being the object of worship from Bharata for the next fourteen years, the period of Rama's exile. This is what Vedanta Desika, also thinks and weaves in his verse No.113 of his Paduka-sahasram. But three verses later he eulogises the Paduka to such heights that this scene of Rama's stepping on and stepping down from the sandals obtains an enormous significance, revealed only by the great intution of the super-devotee Vedanta Desika. The why of that divine act as explained by the master-poet is wonderful.

The Power of Padukas: When the Lord is on the point of embarking on a commitment to walk through the forests of the country for the next fourteen years, he was relying on the power of the Paduka to protect him and his feet. Now that Bharata is asking for the Padukas, and that means separation from them, as far as Rama is concerned, He is now

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stepping up on them and stepping down so as to receive the spiritual vibrations from them and thereby the energy for him to sustain the challenge of walking barefooted through the entire forest. So the poet says: If he did not do it, how could he have walked through the rough ground and dense shrubbery of the Dandaka forest with bare feet for so long? Is this not the height of devotion to the divine sandals on the part of Desika?

The Paduka is greater than even Vibhishana and Sugriva-says the poet in another verse. (Verse No.231) You are even greater than Rama, continues the poet again: Oh sandals, You are even more glorious than Rama whose glory pervades all the three worlds. For, if not, how did Bharata, who wanted only Rama, accept you as security for Rama's return? (Is it not common knowledge that a thing accepted as security for money promised to be returned, must have a value greater than the money lent?) (Verse No.108)

Sri Sthuthi: Sri Desika wrote a Sloka on Perundevi Thayar of Kanchi Varadaraja Temple at the request of Bramhachari. The Bramachari requested Swami to help him to get married. At the conclusion of this Sloka gold coins started pouring from the air and the bramachari took them for his marriage and Swami did not even keep a single coin for himself. It is the belief of every Vaishnava that the daily recitation of this Sloka means that Sri lakshmi is sure to reside in such a house

Swami Sri Vedanta Desikan and Srirangam: Swami Desikan by the beginning of 14th century, had arrived at Srirangam and sought the blessings of Sri Sudharashna Bhattar and on his command decided to debate with the Advaitis there. This work of Swami on the debate which went on for seven days was popularly known as "*Shathadhushini*". Swami Desikan's eloquence and deep reasoning and exumberant debating skills stood no parlance, that Sri Ranganatha Swamy of Srirangam, conferred on him the title of "Vedanta Desikan" and Goddess of Srirangam, Renganayaki, the title "Sarva Tantra Svatantra". He was rightly called "Kavitharkika Simham".

Swami Vedanta Desikan's period in Srirangam is said to have been a defining moment in the "Vaishnava" philosophy for many reasons. The Islamic foeces invaded Srirangam in 1311-12 and stole away the Idol of the presiding deity to Delhi. The people of Srirangam after a prolonged struggle returned back with the God. There was more shock in store, when the second invasion followed in 1327 with such an intense force led by Mallik Kafur and General Alauddin, that Swami Desikan decided to send the Utsava Murthi of Srirangam with a group led by "pillai lokacharayar" and in the same way the Goddesses of temple were also protected. Swami Desikan decided to save the Sanctum Sanctorum by covering it with a brick wall.

Finding the whole of the temple town perturbed by the attack, he composed the "Abheethi Stavam", which was recited by the people to fear not the blatant invasion. Almost 13000 Sri Vaishnavites were killed in the prolonged battle in Srirangam. Sri Sudharshna Bhattar also sacrificed his life in the struggle, not before requesting Swami Desika to bring up his children, who were very young then.

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Along with the children, Swami moved to Thirunarayanapuram, presently in Karnataka, in search of the idol. Swami stayed in Satyakaalam for a period of 12 years and returned to Srirangam and it was Swami who broke the wall and thereby placed the srirangam presiding deity in the Sanctum Sanctorum and initiated again the festivals. Thus Swami protected the temple and handed it over for generations to come.

Apart from Paduka Sahasram, he composed three hymns exclusively on Lord Ranganatha of Srirangam. They are : Bhagavad Dhyana Svapnam, Abheethi Stavam and Nyasa Tilakam.

Swami Desikan attained Paramapadam (heavenly abode) after living for 101 years in Srirangam. The place where Swami lived can be seen in Srirangam even today and is known as "Vedanta Desikan Thirumaligai".

Jaya Tirtha

Seer Jayateertharu was the sixth pontiff of Sri Madhvacharya Peetha. He is one of the most important seers in the Dvaita philosophy on account of his elucidations of Sri Ananda Teertha's masterpieces. He is the one who elucidated Sri Madhvacharya's philosophy clearly and simply so as to be understood by the common man which helped much to spread the Madhva philosophy.

Early Life: He was born as Dhondupant (a.k.a. Dhondurao) to Raghunath and Sakubai Deshpande. His birthplace is Mangalavedhe which lies near Pandharapur in today's Maharashtra. Being born in local Brahmin chieftain's family, he had all the wealth, power, affection. He was very handsome, healthy, intelligent, endowed with physical vigor, and given to outdoor activity such as horse riding.

Legend: Sri Jayateertha was supposed to have been born as a bull in his previous life–the bull that travelled with Sri Anand Teertha carrying his library of his teachings. With such close proximity, the bull would stand and listen to Sri Ananda Teertha's teachings. When some disciples approached Sri Ananda Teertha to seek the privilege of writing commentaries on his works he told them it would not be any of them but the bull that would get the privilege. This resulted in jealousy amongst some of the disciples and the bull being cursed by them to die of snake-bite.

Sri Anand Teertha when he heard of this he changed the wordings of the curse such that the snake that bit the bull would die rather than the bull. When a young Dhondupant was crossing the Bheema River once on a horseback he bent down without dismounting or even stopping the horse and drank water directly from the river. Sri Akshobhya Teertha, a direct disciple of Sri Anand Teertha who happened to witness the event asked him in Sanskrit *"kim pashuh Purva-dehe?"* meaning *"Did you have an animal's body previously?"*.

This triggered the memory of his previous birth within young Dhondupant and reminded him of his duties to Sri Anand Teertha. He was overcome by a desire to renounce material

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life and devote his life to the services of his master. Sri Akshobhya Teertha then initiated him in to Sanyasa. When Raghunath Deshpande, Dhondupant's father came to know about this, he was very angry with Sri Akshobhya Teertha and forcibly took him back home in order to get him married. Forced in to marriage against his wishes Dhondupant took the form of a snake which made his father realize that his son is no ordinary being but born to great deeds. He acquiesced to Dhondupant's sainthood and Dhondupant after blessing his father for another son who would take care of the family attained sainthood and became Sri Jayateertharu.

His Significance: *Nyayasudha* is known as Sri Jayateertha's magnum opus and is the exhaustive and detailed commentary (Teeka is Sanskrit for commentary, hence he also known as *Teekacharya*) of Sri Madhvacharya's *Anuvyakhyana* which in turn itself is a commentary on Brahma Sutra's by Veda Vyasa. Sri Jayateertha has brilliantly and more importantly, sincerely captured the pithy statements of his master in lucid and simple language. It is universally admitted in the Dvaita tradition that the depth and breadth of the philosophical ocean of Tatvavada can only be appreciated with the help of the Nyaya Sudha.

In a very attractive and lucid style, Sri Jaya*Tirtha* not only presents and strongly defends almost all the important philosophical and epistemological issues from the Dvaita point of view, but also severely criticises other major philosophical systems of India such as the Bauddha, Jaina, Nyaya-Vaisesika, Bhatta-Prabhakara Mimamsa, Advaita and Visishtadvaita. Thus, in the Dvaita tradition, the work is held in very high esteem and it is believed that scholarship in Dvaita Vedanta is incomplete without a thorough study of this monumental work.

Brindavana: Sri Jayateertha's BrindaVana is at Malkhed, in the north of modern Karnataka.

Ramakrishna

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa born Gadadhar Chattopadhyay (February 18, 1836-August 16, 1886) was one of the most important Hindu religious teachers of modern times, and is revered by millions of Hindus and non-Hindus to this date as a messenger of God. He is considered by many of his followers to be an avatar, or even to be *avatra varishtha*, the greatest avatar. Ramakrishna was also an influential figure in the Bengal Renaissance of the 19th century.

His teachings emphasized that God-realization is the highest goal of life, love and devotion for God, the oneness of existence, and the harmony of religions.

Biography: Historically, in India, emphasis is given to the teachings of saints and less attention is paid to dates and details. In the case of Ramakrishna, however, there exist first-hand accounts of the details of his life. This was possible because many of his disciples were well-educated and had a strong desire to present only facts that could be

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verified from multiple sources. Some credit for collecting and recording such facts goes to Swami Sharadananda, a disciple of Ramakrishna. He wrote a biography from the legends and stories which were growing around Ramakrishna.

However, the best known record of Ramakrishna's teachings is the Bengali *Kathamrita* written by Mahendranath Gupta (Sri M.). Swami Nikhilananda's translation of this into the English language, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, is the most widely read. In the preface to his translation, Nikhilananda states, "I have made a literal translation, omitting only a few pages of no particular interest to English-speaking readers." Some claim that Nikhilananda's omissions have led to Western difficulties in interpreting the *Kathamrita*.

Childhood: Gadadhar was born in the village of Kamarpukur, in what is now the Hooghly district of West Bengal. Gadadhar's parents, Khudiram and Chandramani, were poor and made ends meet with great difficulty. Gadadhar was extremely popular in his village. He was considered handsome and had a natural gift for the fine arts. He, however, disliked going to school, and was not interested in the pursuit of money. He loved nature and spent his time in fields and fruit gardens outside the village with his friends. He was seen visiting monks who stopped at his village on their way to Puri. He would serve them and listen with rapt attention to the religious debates they often had.

When arrangements for Gadadhar to be invested with the sacred thread (*Upanayana*) were nearly complete, he declared that he would have his first alms as a Brahmin from a certain Sudra woman of the village. This was a shock in the days when tradition required that the first alms be from a brahmin, but he was adamant. He said he had given his word to the lady and if he did not keep his word, what sort of Brahmin would he be? No argument, no appeal, no amount of tears are said to have budged him from his position. Finally, Ramkumar, his eldest brother and the head of the family after the passing away of their father, gave in.

Meanwhile, the family's financial position worsened every day. Ramkumar ran a Sanskrit school in Calcutta and also served as purohit priest in some families. About this time, a rich woman of Calcutta, Rani Rashmoni, founded a temple at Dakshineshwar. She approached Ramkumar to serve as priest at the temple of Kali and Ramkumar agreed. After some persuasion, Gadadhar agreed to decorate the deity. When Ramkumar retired, Gadadhar took his place as priest.

Career as Priest: When Gadadhar started worshipping the deity Bhavatarini, he began to question if he was worshipping a piece of stone or a living Goddess. If he was worshipping a living Goddess, why should she not respond to his worship? This question nagged him day and night. Then, he began to pray to Kali: *"Mother, you've been gracious to many devotees in the past and have revealed yourself to them. Why would you not reveal yourself to me, also? Am I not also your son?"*

He is known to have wept bitterly and sometimes even cry out loudly while worshipping. At night, he would go into a nearby jungle and spend the whole night praying. One day,

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the famous account goes, he was so impatient to see Mother Kali that he decided to end his life. He seized a sword hanging on the wall and was about to strike himself with it, when he is reported to have seen light issuing from the deity in waves. He is said to have been soon overwhelmed by the waves and fell unconscious on the floor.

Gadadhar, however, unsatiated, prayed to Mother Kali for more religious experiences. He especially wanted to know the truths that other religions taught. Strangely, these teachers came to him when necessary and he is said to have reached the ultimate goals of those religions with ease. Soon word spread about this remarkable man and people of all denominations and all stations of life began to come to him.

Initiation: Ramakrishna was initiated in Advaita Vedanta by a wandering monk named Totapuri, in the city of Dakshineshwar. Totapuri was "a teacher of masculine strength, a sterner mien, a gnarled physique, and a virile voice". Ramakrishna would soon affectionately address the monk as Nangta, the "Naked One", because as a Sannyasin (renunciate) he did not wear any clothing.

I [Ramakrishna] said to Totapuri in despair: "It's no good. I will never be able to lift my spirit to the unconditioned state and find myself face to face with the *Atman*." He [Totapuri] replied severely: "What do you mean you can't? You must!" Looking about him, he found a shard of glass. He took it and stuck the point between my eyes saying: "Concentrate your mind on that point." [...] The last barrier vanished and my spirit immediately precipitated itself beyond the plane of the conditioned. I lost myself in Samadhi.

After the departure of Totapuri, Ramakrishna reportedly remained for six month in a state of absolute contemplations:

> *For six months in a stretch, I [Ramakrishna] remained in that state from which ordinary men can never return; generally the body falls off, after three weeks, like a sere leaf. I was not conscious of day or night. Flies would enter my mouth and nostrils as they do a dead's body, but I did not feel them. My hair became matted with dust.*

Married Life: Rumours spread to Kamarpukur that Ramakrishna had gone mad as a result of over-taxing spiritual exercises at Dakshineshwar. Alarmed, neighbours advised Ramakrishna's mother that he be persuaded to marry, so that he might be more conscious of his responsibilities to the family. Far from objecting to the marriage, he, in fact, mentioned Jayrambati, three miles to the north-west of Kamarpukur, as being the village where the bride could be found at the house of one Ramchandra Mukherjee. The bride of five-years, Sharada, was found and the marriage was duly solemnised. Sharada was Ramakrishna's first disciple. He attempted to teach her everything he learnt from his various Gurus. She is believed to have mastered every religious secret as quickly as Ramakrishna had. Impressed by her religious potential, he began to treat her as the Universal Mother Herself and performed a Puja considering Sharada as veritable Tripura

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Sundari Devi. He said, 'I look upon you as my own mother and the Mother who is in the temple'. Ramakrishna impressed upon Sharada Devi that she was not only the mother of his young disciples, but also of the entire humanity. Initially, Sharada Devi was shy about playing this role, but slowly, she filled it with courage.

Her renunciation is believed by devotees to be a striking quality that she shared with her husband in a measure equal to, if not beyond, his. The true nature of their relationship and kinship was believed to be beyond the grasp of ordinary minds. Ramakrishna concluded, after close and constant association with her, that her relationship and attitude toward him were firmly based on a divine spiritual plane. Devotees believe that as they shared their lives, day and night, no other thought, other than that of the divine presence, arose in their minds. An account of such continued divine relationship between two souls of opposite gender is unique in religious records, not known in any of the past hagiographies. After the passing away of Ramakrishna, Sharada Devi became a religious teacher in her own rights.

Later Life: He soon came to be known as Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and like a magnet, is said to have begun to attract genuine seekers of God. He taught ceaselessly for fifteen years or so through parables, metaphors, songs and above all by his own life, the basic truths of religion. He had developed throat cancer and attained MahaSamadhi at a Garden House in Cossipore on 16 August, 1886, leaving behind a devoted band of 16 young disciples headed by the well-known saint-philosopher and orator, Swami Vivekananda and host of householder disciples. Among his contemporaries, Keshab Chandra Sen and Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, who were known to be against Hindu idol-worship, were his admirers.

Religious Perspectives

Teachings: Ramakrishna emphasized that God-realization is the supreme goal of all living beings (*Kathamrita*, 1/10/6). Hence, for him, religion served as a means for the achievement of this goal. Ramakrishna's mystical realization, classified by Hindu tradition as nirvikalpa Samadhi (literally, "constant meditation", thought to be absorption in the all-encompassing Consciousness), led him to believe that various religions are various ways to reach the Absolute, and that the Ultimate Reality could never be expressed in human terms. This is in agreement with the Rigvedic proclamation that "Truth is one but sages call it by many a name." As a result of this opinion, Ramakrishna actually spent periods of his life practicing his own understandings of Islam, Christianity and various other Yogic and Tantric sects within Hinduism.

Devotees believe that Ramakrishna's realization of *nirvikalpa Samadhi* also led him to an understanding of the two sides of maya (illusion), to which he referred as avidyamaya and vidyamaya: He explained that *avidyamaya* represents the dark forces of creation (*e.g.* sensual desire, evil passions, greed, lust and cruelty), which keep the world system on lower planes of consciousness. These forces are responsible for human entrapment in the

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cycle of birth and death, and they must be fought and vanquished. *Vidyamaya*, on the other hand, represents the higher forces of creation (*e.g.* spiritual virtues, enlightening qualities, kindness, purity, love, and devotion), which elevate human beings to the higher planes of consciousness. With the help of vidyamaya, he said that devotees could rid themselves of *avidyamaya* and achieve the ultimate goal of becoming *mayatita-that is, free from maya.*

Ramakrishna's proclamation of *jatra jiv tatra Shiv* (wherever there is a living being, there is Shiva) stemmed from his Advaitic perception of Reality. This would lead him teach his disciples, "*Jive daya noy, Shiv gyane jiv seba*" (not kindness to living beings, but serving the living being as Shiva Himself). This view differs considerably from the "sentimental pantheism" of Francis of Assisi.

Ramakrishna, though not formally trained as a philosopher, had an intuitive grasp of complex philosophical concepts. According to him the visible universe and many other universes (Brahmanda)are mere bubbles emerging out of the all supreme ocean of intelligence (Brahman) (*Gospel of Ramakrishna*, vol. 4*)*.

The key concepts in Ramakrishna's teachings were:

- the oneness of existence
- the divinity of all living beings
- the unity of God and the harmony of religions
- that the primal bondage in human life is lust and greed (*kamini* and *kanchana* in Bengali)

A personal account of his life and teachings is recorded by his disciple, Mahendranath Gupta, simply known as "M", in Kathamrita. The account makes us aware of Ramakrishna's distinctive conversational style, his profuse employment of metaphors and parables, his characteristic wit and his frequent use of Bangla dialect words and idioms.

Like Adi Shankara had done more than a thousand years earlier, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa revitalized Hinduism which had been fraught with excessive ritualism and superstition in the nineteenth century and helped it better respond to challenges from Islam, Christianity and the dawn of the modern era. However, unlike Adi Shankara Ramakrishna developed ideas about post-Samadhi descent of consciousness into the phenomenal world, which he went on to term as *Vignana*. While he asserted the supreme validity of Advaita Vedanta, he also proclaimed that he accepts both the *Nitya* (Eternal Substratum) and the Leela (lit. play, indicating the dynamic Phenomenal Reality) as aspects of the Brahman. The idea of the descent of consciousness shows the influence of the Bhakti movement and certain sub-schools of Shaktism on Ramakrishna's thought. The idea would later influence Aurobindo's views about the Divine Life on Earth.

Ramakrishna's Impact: Born as he was during a social upheaval in Bengal in particular and India in general, Ramakrishna and his movement was an important part of the direction that Hinduism and Indian nationalism took in the coming years.

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On Hinduism: The Hindu Renaissance that India experienced in the 19th century may be said to have been spurred by his life and work. Although the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj preceded the Ramakrishna Mission, their influence was limited on a broader level. With the emergence of the Mission, however, the situation changed dramatically. The Ramakrishna Mission was founded by Ramakrishna himself when he had distributed the *gerua* cloth of renunciation to his direct disciples. This is corroborated by Swami Vivekananda himself when he says that without Thakur's grace all this would not have been possible. Many Ramakrishnites believe that Vivekananda acted as Ramakrishna's message—bearer to the West and hence helped in the fulfillment of their master's spiritual mission.

Hinduism faced a huge intellectual challenge in the 19th century, from Westerners and Indians alike. The Hindu practice of idol worship came under intense pressure specially in Bengal, then the centre of British India, and was declared intellectually unsustainable. Response to this was varied, ranging from Young Bengal movement that denounced Hinduism and embraced Christianity or atheism, to the Brahmo movement that retained primacy of Hinduism but gave up idol worship, and to the staunch Hindu nationalism of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. Ramakrishna's influence was crucial in this period for a Hindu revival of a more traditional kind, and can be compared to that of Chaitanya's contribution centuries earlier, when Hinduism in Bengal was under similar pressure from the growing power of Islam.

It would be difficult to give a comprehensive description of Ramakrishna's influence on Hinduism, but some important contributions of his can nevertheless be detected. In his worship of Mother Kali's murti, he questions the crux of idol worship-whether he is worshipping a piece of stone or a living Goddess and why she does not respond to his prayers. He is reassured several times by experiences that show him that she is present. To the many that revered him, this reinforced centuries old traditions that were in glaring spotlight at the time. Ramakrishna also touted an inclusive version of the religion, declaring *Joto mot toto path*. In Bangla, this roughly means *Every opinion yields a path*. He adopted a name that is clearly Vaishnavite (Rama and Krishna are both incarnations of Vishnu), but was a devotee of Kali, the mother Goddess, and known to have followed various other religious paths including Tantrism and even Christianity and Islam.

On Indian Nationalism: Ramakrishna's impact on the growing Indian nationalism was, if more indirect, neverthless quite notable. A large number of intellectuals of that age had regular communication with him and respected him, though not all of them necessarily agreed with him on religious matters. Numerous members of the Brahmo Samaj respected him.

Though some of them embraced his form of Hinduism, the fact that many others didn't shows that they detected in him a possibility for a strong national identity in the face of a colonial adversary that was intellectually undermining the Indian civilization. As

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Amoury de Riencourt states," The greatest leaders of the early twentieth century, whatever their walk of life—Rabindranath Tagore, the prince of poets; Aurobindo Ghosh, the greatest mystic-philosopher; Mahatma Gandhi, who eventually shook the Anglo-Indian Empire to destruction—all acknowledged their over-riding debt to both the Swan and the Eagle, to Ramakrishna who stirred the heart of India, and to Vivekananda who awakened its soul." This is particularly evident in Ramakrishna's development of the Mother-symbolism and its eventual role in defining the incipient Indian nationalisms. A similar statement could be made about the fact that Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Ramakrishna held each other in high esteem, in spite of the fact that the first was a declared atheist.

Vivekananda, Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission: Vivekananda, Ramakrishna's most illustrious disciple, is considered by some to be one of his most important legacies. Vivekananda spread the message of Ramakrishna across the world. He also helped introduce Hinduism to the west. He founded two organisations based on the teachings of Ramakrishna. One was Ramakrishna Mission, which is designed to spread the word of Ramakrishna. Vivekananda also designed it's emblem. Ramakrishna Math was created as a monastic order based on Ramakrishna's teachings.

The Ramakrishna Mission went to the courts in the 1980s in order to have their organization and movement declared as a non-Hindu minority religion. They sought to gain in this way the same privileges that are accorded only to the minority religions. The constitution privileges minority religions, *e.g.* in Article 30. it gives them greater control over their educational institutions: "All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice." But their case was turned down by the Calcutta High Court and the Supreme Court.

Contemporary Influence: It could be argued that Ramakrishna's vision of Hinduism, and its popularisation by western converts like Christopher Isherwood, have largely coloured Western notions of what Hinduism is. Some, like Andrew Harvey and Ken Wilber, see the beginning of a new planetary consciousness with Ramakrishna's life.

Religious scholar Jeffrey Kripal has written a controversial psychoanalytic study of Ramakrishna. Kripal adopts a multi-disciplinary approach to probe into the life of the mystic and uncover the connections between Tantric and psychoanalytic hermeneutical traditions. The book theorizes upon an alleged homoerotic strain in Ramakrishna's life, sadhana and philosophy. It has been criticized by the Ramakrishna Mission and other followers as being based on many mistranslations of primary sources, deceptions, and an incorrect use of psychoanalysis as a tool in forming the theory.

Historian Narasingha Sil has also written an account of Ramakrishna that suggests that Ramakrishna's mystical experiences were pathological and originated from alleged childhood sexual trauma. Other scholars, most notably psychologist Sudhir Kakar, judged Sil's study to be simplistic and misleading. Kakar sought a metapsychological non-pathological explanation that focuses on the pre-Oedipal and the Lacanian Real, and

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connects Ramakrishna's mystical noesis (*Bhava*) with creativity. Kakar also argues that culturally relative concepts of eroticism and gender that have contributed to the Western difficulty in comprehending Ramakrishna. Sil's theorization has also been viewed as reductive by William B.Parsons, who has called for an increased empathetic dialogue between the classical/adaptive/transformative schools and the mystical traditions for an enhanced understanding of Ramakrishna's life and experiences.

Ramana Maharshi

Sri Ramana Maharshi (December 30, 1879 – April 14, 1950) was an Indian mystic. He primarily advocated Self-Enquiry (*Atma-Vichara*) to attain spiritual realization.

Life: Sri Ramana was the second of four children of Sundaram Iyer and Azhahammal, and was named Venkataraman at birth. He was born in a village called Tiruchuzhi near Madurai in Tamil Nadu, South India. Venkataraman's father died when he was twelve, so he moved to his uncle's house in Madurai.

It was in Madurai that Venkataraman had the life-changing experience in mid-July, 1896 (he was 16 then): while sitting alone in a small room upstairs, a great fear arose in him that he was going to die and he ventured to scrutinize it (apparantly, there was no sickness in the body): in Sri Ramana's words *"Yes, death has come; let it come. What is death? To whom does it come? To me. Who am I? What is it that is dying? Yes, it is this body that is dying; let it die* ". Deciding thus, he lay down stretching his arms and legs. Closing his lips tightly and remaining without speech or breath, he turned his attention very keenly towards himself.

In this state of *rigor mortis*, he realized: *"All right, this body is dead. Now it will be taken to the cremation ground and burnt. It will become ashes. But with the destruction of this body, am I also destroyed? Am I really this body? Untouched by this death which has turned the body into a corpse, here and now* ***I am still existing and shining****. Then I am not this perishable body. I and it [the body] are different. I am the indestructible I."*

Venkataraman stayed in Madurai at his uncle's house for two months after his experience. When naggingly prompted by his elder brother about his intense introspection he secretly left and travelled to the town of Tiruvannamalai and lived there for the rest of his life (he never left the town).

Several visitors came to him and many became his disciples. Sri Ganapathi Shastri, a Vedic scholar of repute in his age, came to visit Sri Ramana in 1907; after receiving instructions from him, he proclaimed him as Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Sri Ramana was known henceforth by this name for the rest of his life.

Sri Ramana was distinguished for silence and sparse use of speech. He led a modest life and depended on visitors and devotees for the barest necessities. His disciples established an Ashram (Sri Ramanashramam) in Tiruvannamalai to propogate his message; the Ashram now has several branches throughout India and abroad.

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Teachings: Sri Ramana's teachings about Self-Enquiry can be classified as the Path of Knowledge (*Jnana marga*) among the Indian schools of thought. The teachings are non-dualistic (Advaitic) (please see below the comparison of Sri Ramana's teachings and traditional non-dualistic schools).

His primary teachings are documented in the book *Nan Yar* (Who am I), originally written in Tamil (see note at the end of this section about *Nan Yar*). Given below are selections from the book:

- Since all the living beings desire to be happy always, without any misery..., it is necessary to know oneself. For that, enquiry in the form 'Who am I' alone is the principal means.
- Knowledge itself is 'I'. The nature of (this) knowledge is existence-consciousness-bliss
- What is called mind is a wondrous power existing in Self. It projects all thoughts. If we set aside all thoughts and see, there will be no such thing as mind remaining separate; therefore, thought itself is the form of the mind. Other than thoughts, there is no such thing as the world.
- Of all the thoughts that rise in the mind, the thought 'I' is the first thought.
- That which rises in this body as 'I' is the mind. If one enquires 'In which place in the body does the thought 'I' rise first?, it will be known to be in the heart [spiritual heart is 'two digits to the right from the centre of the chest']. Even if one incessantly thinks 'I', 'I', it will lead to that place (Self)'
- The mind will subside only by means of the enquiry 'Who am I?'. The thought 'Who am I?', destroying all other thoughts, will itself finally be destroyed like the stick used for stirring the funeral pyre.
- If other thoughts rise, one should, without attempting to complete them, enquire, 'To whom did they arise?', it will be known 'To me'. If one then enquires 'Who am I?', the mind (power of attention) will turn back to its source. By repeatedly practising thus, the power of the mind to abide in its source increases.
- The place where even the slightest trace of the 'I' does not exist, alone is Self.
- Self itself is the world; Self itself is 'I'; Self itself is God; all is the Supreme Self (*Shiva swarupam*)

Although his primary teaching was Self-Enquiry, he was also known to have advised the use of Self Surrender (to one's Deity or Guru) as an alternative means, which would ultimately converge in to the path of Self-Enquiry.

Sri Ramana's Teachings and the Traditional Advaitic (non-dualistic) School: Sri Ramana's teachings and the traditional Advaitic school of thought pioneered by Sri Shankaracharya have many things in common. However, there are some differences: the traditional Advaitic school recommends a negationist *neti, neti* (Sanskrit, "not this", "not

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this") path, while Sri Ramana advocates affirmative enquiry "*Nan Yar*" (Tamil, "Who am I").

To elaborate:

- The traditional Advaitic (non-dualistic) school advocates "elimination of all that is non-self (the five sheaths) until only the Self remains". The five sheaths that hide the true Self are: Material, Vital, Mental, Knowledge, and Blissful (*Annamaya, Pranamaya, Manomaya, Vijnanamaya*, and *Anandamaya kosas* (sheaths)
- Sri Ramana says "enquiry in the form 'Who am I' alone is the principal means. To make the mind subside, there is no adequate means other than Enquiry. If controlled by other means, mind will remain as if subsided, but will rise again"

Teachers in his Tradition: Several followers of Sri Ramana became teachers in their own right, and have subsequently spawned their own successors as well, including H. W. L. Poonja, Lakshmana Swamy, and Annamalai Swami. Western followers of Sri Ramana include Robert Adams, I am & The Enlightenment Institute), Paul Brunton, Arunachala Ramana, Nome of Society of Abidance in Truth, Neelam, Gangaji, Eli Jaxon-Bear, Catherine Ingram, Isaac Shapiro and Madhukar.

Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda whose pre-monastic name was *Narendranath Dutta* (January 12, 1863-July 4, 1902) was one of the most famous and influential spiritual leaders of the Vedanta philosophy. He was the chief disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and was the founder of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. Many consider him an icon for his fearless courage, his positive exhortations to the youth, his broad outlook on social problems, and countless lectures and discourses on Vedanta philosophy.

Birth and Early Life: Narendranath Dutta was born in Shimla Pally, Kolkata, West Bengal, India on January 12, 1863 as the son of Viswanath Dutta and Bhuvaneswari Devi. Even as he was young, he showed a precocious mind and keen memory. He practiced meditation from a very early age. While at school, he was good at studies, as well as games of various kinds. He organised an amateur theatrical company and a gymnasium and took lessons in fencing, wrestling, rowing and other sports. He also studied instrumental and vocal music. He was a leader among his group of friends. Even when he was young, he questioned the validity of superstitious customs and discrimination based on caste and religion.

In 1879, Narendra entered the Presidency College, Calcutta for higher studies. After one year, he joined the Scottish Church College, Calcutta and studied philosophy. During the course, he studied western logic, western philosophy and history of European nations.

Questions started to arise in young Narendra's mind about God and the presence of God. This made him associate with the Brahmo Samaj, an important religious movement of the time, led by Keshab Chandra Sen. But the Samaj's congregational prayers and

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devotional songs could not satisfy Narendra's zeal to realise God. He would ask leaders of Brahma Samaj whether they have seen God. He never got a satisfying answer. It was during this time that Professor Hastie of Scottish Church College told him about Sri Ramakrishna of Dakshineshwar.

With Ramakrishna: Narendra met Ramakrishna for the first time in November 1881. He asked Ramakrishna the same old question, whether he had seen God. The instantaneous answer from Ramakrishna was, *"Yes, I see God, just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense."* Narendra was astounded and puzzled. He could feel the man's words were honest and uttered from depths of experience. He started visiting Ramakrishna frequently.

Though Narendra could not accept Ramakrishna and his visions, he could not neglect him. It had always been in Narendra's nature to test something thoroughly before he could accept it. He tested Ramakrishna to the maximum, but the master was patient, forgiving, humorous, and full of love. He never asked Narendra to abandon reason, and he faced all of Narendra's arguments and examinations with infinite patience. In time, Narendra accepted Ramakrishna, and while he accepted, his acceptance was whole-hearted. While Ramakrishna predominantly taught duality and Bhakti to his other disciples, he taught Narendra the Advaita Vedanta, the philosophy of non-dualism.

During the course of five years of his training under Ramakrishna, Narendra was transformed from a restless, puzzled, impatient youth to a mature man who was ready to renounce everything for the sake of God-realization. Soon, Ramakrishna's end came in the form of throat cancer in August 1886. After this Narendra and a core group of Ramakrishna's disciples took vows to become monks and renounce everything, and started living in a supposedly haunted house in Baranagore. They took alms to satisfy their hunger and their other needs were taken care of by Ramakrishna's richer householder disciples.

Wanderings in India: Soon, the young monks of Baranagore wanted to live the life of a wandering monk with rags and a begging bowl and no other possessions. On July 1890, Vivekananda set out for a long journey, without knowing where the journey would take him. The journey that followed took him to the length and breadth of the Indian subcontinent. During these days, Vivekananda assumed various names like Vividishananda, Satchidananda, etc., It is said that he was given the name *Vivekananda* by Maharaja of Khetri for his discernment of things, good and bad.

During these wandering days, Vivekananda stayed on king's palaces, as well as the huts of the poor. He came in close contact with the culture of different regions of India and various classes of people in India. Vivekananda observed the imbalance in society and tyranny in the name of caste. He realised the need for a national rejuvenation if India was to survive at all. He reached Kanyakumari, the southernmost tip of the Indian subcontinent on 24 December 1892. There, he swam across the sea and started meditating

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on a lone rock. He thus meditated for three days and said later that he meditated about the past, present and future of India. The rock went on to become the Vivekananda memorial at Kanyakumari.

Vivekananda went to Madras and spoke about his plans for India and Hinduism to the young men of Madras. They were impressed by the monk and urged him to go to the United States and represent Hinduism in the World Parliament of Religions. Thus, helped by his friends at Chennai, Bhaskara Sethupathi, Raja of Ramnad and Maharajas of Mysore and Khetri, Vivekananda set out on his journey to the USA. The invite of the conference was actually given to Bhaskara Sethupathi, Raja of Ramnad to attend the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago. But he decided and encouraged Swami Vivekananda was the right person to participate and represent the views of Hinduism in the Parliament of World Religions.

In the West: Vivekananda was received well at the 1893 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, where he delivered a series of lectures. He also earned wild applause for beginning his address with the famous words, *"Sisters and brothers of America."* Vivekananda's arrival in the USA has been identified by many to mark the beginning of western interest in Hinduism not as merely an exotic eastern oddity, but as a vital religious and philosophical tradition that might actually have something important to teach the West.

Within a few years of the Parliament, he had started Vedantic centres in New York City and London, lectured at major universities and generally kindled western interest in Hinduism. His success was not without controversy, much of it from Christian missionaries of whom he was fiercely critical. After four years of constant touring, lecturing and retreats in the West, he came back to India in the year 1897.

Back in India: Admirers and devotees of Vivekananda gave him an enthusiastic reception on his return to India. In India, he delivered a series of lectures, and this set of lectures known as "Lectures from Colombo to Almora" is considered to have uplifted the morale of the then downtrodden Indian society. He founded the Ramakrishna Mission. This institution is now one of the largest monastic orders of Hindu society in India.

However, he had to bear great criticism from other orthodox Hindus for having travelled in—what they perceived to be—the impure West. His contemporaries also questioned his motives, wondering whether the fame and glory of his Hindu evangelism compromised his original monastic vows. His enthusiasm for America and Britain, and his spiritual devotion to his motherland, caused significant tension in his last years.

He once again toured the west from January 1899 to December 1900.

Death: On July 4, 1902 at Belur Math near Kolkata, he taught Vedanta philosophy to some pupils in the morning. He had a walk with Swami Premananda, a brother-disciple and gave him instructions concerning the future of the Ramakrishna Math. The same day, Vivekananda died of heart failure at the young age of 39.

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Principles and Philosophy: Vivekananda was a renowned thinker in his own right. One of his most important contributions was to demonstrate how Advaitin thinking is not merely philosophically far-reaching, but how it also has social, even political, consequences. One important lesson he claimed to receive from Ramakrishna was that "Jiva is Shiva " (each individual is divinity itself).

This became his Mantra, and he coined the concept of *daridra narayana seva*-the service of God in and through (poor) human beings. *If there truly is the unity of* Brahman *underlying all phenomena, then on what basis do we regard ourselves as better or worse, or even as better-off or worse-off, than others?*-This was the question he posed to himself. Ultimately, he concluded that these distinctions fade into nothingness in the light of the oneness that the devotee experiences in *Moksha*. What arises then is compassion for those "individuals" who remain unaware of this oneness and a determination to help them.

Swami Vivekananda belonged to that branch of Vedanta that held that no one can be truly free until all of us are. Even the desire for personal salvation has to be given up, and only tireless work for the salvation of others is the true mark of the enlightened person. He founded the Sri Ramakrishna Math and Mission on the principle of **Atmano Mokshartham Jagad-hitaya cha** (for one's own salvation and for the welfare of the World).

However, Vivekananda also pleaded for a strict separation between religion and government ("church and state"). Although social customs had been formed in the past with religious sanction, it was not now the business of religion to interfere with matters such as marriage, inheritance and so on. The ideal society would be a mixture of Brahmin knowledge, Kshatriya culture, Vaisya efficiency and the egalitarian Shudra ethos. Domination by any one led to different sorts of lopsided societies. Vivekananda did not feel that religion, nor, any force for that matter, should be used forcefully to bring about an ideal society, since this was something that would evolve naturally by individualistic change when the conditions were right.

Vivekananda made a strict demarcation between the two classes of Hindu scriptures : the Shruti and the Smritis. The Shruti, by which is meant the Vedas, consist of eternally and universally valid spiritual truths. The Smritis on the other hand, are the dos and donts of religions, applicable to society and subject to revision from time to time. Vivekananda felt that existing Hindu smritis had to be revised for modern times. But the Srutis of course are eternal-they may only be re-interpreted.

Vivekanda advised his followers to be holy, unselfish and have shraddha (faith). He encouraged the practise of Brahmacharya (Celibacy). In one of the conversations with his childhood friend *Sri Priya Nath Sinha* he attributes his physical and mental strengths, eloquence to the practice of brahmacharya.

Vivekananda didn't advocate the emerging area of parapsychology, astrology (one instance can be found in his speech *Man the Maker of his Destiny*, *Complete-Works, Volume*

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8, Notes of Class Talks and Lectures) saying that this form of curiosity doesn't help in spiritual progress but actually hinders it.

Interaction with Notable Contemporaries: Many years after his death, Rabindranath Tagore (a prominent member of the Brahmo Samaj) had said: *If you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative.* Incidentally, in the earlier years Tagore did not have much respect for Swami Vivekananda for his idol-worshipping. On the other hand, Vivekananda was not particularly impressed by Tagore, though he had been interacting with Tagore's father Maharshi Debendra Nath. Vivekananda was a very good singer and used to sing lots of *Bhajans*, including about twelve written and composed by Tagore.

Mahatma Gandhi who strived for a lot of reform in Hinduism himself, said: *Swami Vivekananda's writings need no introduction from anybody. They make their own irresistible appeal.*

Though it may not be obvious, Swami Vivekananda inspired India's freedom struggle movement. His writings inspired a whole generation of freedom fighters, in Bengal in particular and India at large. Most prominent among them are Bagha Jatin and Subhash Chandra Bose:

> *I cannot write about Vivekananda without going into raptures. Few indeed could comprehend or fathom him even among those who had the privilege of becoming intimate with him. His personality was rich, profound and complex... Reckless in his sacrifice, unceasing in his activity, boundless in his love, profound and versatile in his wisdom, exuberant in his emotions, merciless in his attacks but yet simple as a child, he was a rare personality in this world of ours...* *Subhash Chandra Bose,*

Aurobindo Ghosh, actually considered *Swamiji* as his mentor. While in Alipore Jail, Sri Aurobindo used to be visited by Swami Vivekananda in his meditation. *Swamiji* guided Sri Aurobindo's yoga.

> *Vivekananda was a soul of puissance if ever there was one, a very lion among men, but the definitive work he has left behind is quite incommensurate with our impression of his creative might and energy. We perceive his influence still working gigantically, we know not well how, we know not well where, in something that is not yet formed, something leonine, grand, intutive, upheaving that has entered the soul of India and we say, "Behold, Vivekananda still lives in the soul of his Mother and in the souls of her children.* *—Sri Aurobindo—1915 in Vedic Magazine.*

Vivekananda inspired Jamshedji Tata to set up Indian Institute of Science, one of India's finest Institutions.

Abroad, he had some interactions with Max Muller. Nikola Tesla was one of those influenced by the Vedic philosophy teachings of the Swami Vivekananda.

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Narayana Guru

Naryana Guru (1856-1928) was a sage and social reformer of India. He was born into Ezhava family. (Ezhava caste, because of its precarious position between the upper and lowest strata in the caste hierarchy, faced much social injustice). *Gurudeva* as he is fondly called revolted against casteism and thereby transformed the society in Kerala.

Naryana Guru is revered for his *Vedic* knowledge, poetic proficiency, openness to the views of others, non-violent philosophy and his unrelenting resolve to set aright social wrongs. Naryana Guru was instrumental in setting the spiritual foundations for social reform in the current State of Kerala (erstwhile states of Travancore, Kochi and Malabar district of British India) and was one of the most successful social reformers who tackled caste in India. He demonstrated a path to social emancipation without invoking the dualism of the opressed and the opressor.

In contrast to certain other reformers who criticised Brahmins and upper caste Hindus for the conditions of the lower castes, Naryana Guru stressed on the uplift of a community through its own efforts by the establishment of schools and temples. In the process he brushed aside the Hindu religious conventions based upon *Chaturvarna*. His transformation of the social face of Kerala relied on emphasizing the Advaita philosophy of Shankara.

Early Life: The Guru was born at Chempazhanthi, a small village near ThiruVananthapuram, Circa 1856. As the only son of his parents, who had three daughters, the young boy was named Nnu (shortname for *Naryana*). The small thatched house where Nnu was born is preserved to date as a historical monument. Nnu's father Mandanan [n, of the *Valyalvrathu* joint family, was a Sanskrit teacher knowledgeable in astrology, Ayurvedic medicine and the epics of Hinduism. Nnu's uncle Krishnan Vaidyan was a reputed Ayurvedic physician and Sanskrit scholar. Nnu is said to have been initiated into traditional formal education *Ezhuthinirithal* under Chempazhanthi Pillai, a local schoolmaster and village officer. Besides schooling, young Nnu continued to be educated at home, under the guidance of his father and his uncle Krishnan Vaidyan, where he was taught basics of the Tamil and Sanskrit languages and traditional subjects such as *Siddharkpam*, *Blaprobhodhanam* and *Amarakoam*.

Biographical accounts describe Nnu as a reticent and intelligent boy who was intensely drawn to devout worship at the *Manackal* temple adjacent to the *Valyalvrathu* home. The boy Nnu is also said to have many a times criticised his own relatives for social discrimination and the apartheid-like practices of segregation of children of, supposedly, lower castes in his times. He is also said to have preferred solitude for meditation and to have shown a strong aptitude for poetics and reasoning, composing hymns and singing them in praise of God. He lost his mother around the age of 15. Nnu is thought to have spent most of his adolescent years and early youth assisting both his father, in tutoring, and his uncle in the practice of Ayurvedic medicine whilst for the rest of the time he gave himself to intense devotional practices at temples nearby.

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Transformation as Master, Yogi and Seeker of Truth: At the age of 21 young Nnu was sent for further education under an eminent scholar Kummampilli Rman Pillai [n of Karunagapalli. Living as a guest in a prominent family house *Varanapallil* near Kayankulam, Nnu, along with other students, was tutored by this scholar in subjects like advanced Sanskrit Language and Poetry, Drama and Literary Criticism, and Logical Rhetoric.

Around the age of 25, Nnu returned to his village after which he was off and on involved in running a village school for children. His role as a teacher gained him the name Nnu [n] meaning a master or teacher). Whilst teaching and continuing with his quest for Truth, through self-study and his own experiences in life, Nnu [n moved around on foot to places in the vicinity, often spending time in the confines of temples, writing poems and hymns and lecturing to village folk on philosophy and moral values.

Though married, through an initiative by his sisters, Nnu [n] was not inclined towards a married life, nor is much known about his marital life, which would have ended with the increasing intensity of his spiritual inclination and drifting as a wandering ascetic in search of truth, as did Gautama Buddha.

During his meandering days, at the house of another Sanskrit scholar and old classmate, Perunalli Krishnan Vidayar, Nnu [n got introduced to many learned men and peers, including Kunjan Pilla, who was destined to become his spiritual guide and soulmate Chattampi Swamikal. Kunjan Pilla, who discovered and appreciated Nnu [n's] philosophical genius and passion for Yoga, introduced Nnu [n to a master of Yogic practices by name Thycaud Ayyavu. Under the Yogi Thycaud Ayyavu, Nnu [n mastered various Yogic practices including *Hatha Yoga*. The exposure gained from this scholastic experience had a lasting impact on the later life and philosophy of Naryana Guru.

Enlightenment and its Poetic Expression: It is uncertain as to when precisely Nnu [n] moved to his hermitage deep inside the hilly forest area in Maruthwmala, where he is said to have subjected himself to the most austere life immersed in meditative thought, other rigorous yoga practices and extreme sustenance rituals. After an unpretentious life of over thirty years abounding in knowledge and harsh experiences, this epoch is considered the culmination of the meditative recluse; the point at which Naryana Guru is believed to have attained a state of Enlightenment, *i.e.* an absolute state of wisdom or awakening.

Naryana Guru's later literary and philosophical masterpiece *Atmopade[a Zatakam (one hundred verses of self-instruction, written in Malayalam circa 1897)* is considered a fertile poetic expression, encapsulating the Guru's philosophy of egalitarianism, emanating from the author's attainment of an experienced state of primordial knowledge and quintessence of the Universe; and his ensuing ability to view the human race, from a dignified and elevated perspective, as nothing but one of a genus, in unqualified equality and without any racial, religious, caste or other discriminations whatsoever.

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Concering the caste system, he said the following:

> *"The caste-Hindus and the low caste-Hindus are both the sons of Hinduism. The caste-Hindu is the elder brother who shoulders responsibility, and he therefore exercises certain privileges. The low caste-Hindu is his younger brother who is to be cared for. If the elder brother turns out to be somewhat rough and aggressive that should not make the younger brother a runaway from his mother Hinduism."*

Consecration of Shiva Lingam at Aruvippuram: During his wandering life he happened to be at Aruvippuram in 1888. In the month of March that year, because of the request from local people who had no privileges to enter into Hindu temples, he decided to build a place of worship. He picked up a stone from a nearby river (Neyyar) and used it as an idol for the proposed temple and consecrated it.

This in itself was revolutionary step for according to some of the Hindu scriptures, only brahmins can consecrate a temple. To the brahmins who questioned his right to do so, he replied that what he consecrated was not a brahmin Shiva. Those who questioned the timing of the consecration saying it was not an astrologically auspicious time, he replied: *Horoscope is to be cast after the birth of a child, not before.* He instructed to place a plaque containing a motto on the temple wall which read as:

Devoid of dividing walls of Caste
Or hatred of rival faith,
We all live here
In Brotherhood,
Such, know this place to be!
This Model Foundation!

Narayana Guru's Tomb at Sivagiri: A new phase began in the Guru's life in 1904. He decided to give up his wandering life and settle down in a place to continue his Sadhana (spiritual practice) he choose Sivagiri, twenty miles to the north of ThiruVananthapuram. Goddess 'Amba' became his deity of worship.

Next, he started a Sanskrit school in Varkala. Poor boys and orphans were taken under his care. They were given education regardless of caste distinctions. Temples were built at different places-Trichur, Kannur, Anjuthengu, Tellicherry, Calicut, Mangalore. A temple was built for Sharada Devi in 1912, at Sivagiri. Worship at such temples helped to reduce to a large extent superstitious beliefs and practices.

In 1913, he founded an Ashram at Alwaye. It was called *Advaita Ashram*. This was an important event in his spiritual quest. That Ashram was dedicated to a great principle-*Om Sahodaryam Sarvatra* (all men are equal in the eyes of God). This became the motto of the new Ashram.

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When Naryana Guru attained the age of sixty, his birth day was observed throughout the west-coast from Mangalore to Sri Lanka. Between the years 1918 and 1923 he visited and taught in Sri Lanka. In 1921, a Conference of Universal Brotherhood was held at Alwaye. Again in 1924, a conference of all religions was held at Alwaye. The Guru stressed the need for a *Brahma Vidyalaya* for a comparative study of different religious faiths.

Sree Naryana Guru has many followers and disciples. Nataraja Guru, a notable disciple of Sree Naryana Guru, introduced Guru's visions and ideals to the western world. He established Narayana Gurukulamin 1923 at the Nilgiris with the blessings of Naryana Guru.

Naryana Guru's Philosophy: After a span of a millennium since the time of Adi Shankara, Sree Naryana Guru was the next greatest proponent and re-evaluator of Advaita Vedanta and hailing from the same geographic region, *i.e.*, present-day Kerala. Naryana Guru's philosophy, which is fundamentally of Advaitic and non-dual wisdom in principles, further extended Advaita concepts into practical modes of self-realisation through spiritual education, compassion and vision for peaceful co-existence of the human race, whilst promoting social equality and universal brotherhood.

His philosophy of non-violence and ahimsa strongly denounced discrimination in the name of caste or religion, and emphasised focusing on education and private enterprise for the ongoing uplift of the quality of life. The Guru's philosophy emphasised the consistency between true existence of the "common reality" on Earth and one Divine behind the creation and sustenance of the Universe, dismissing any concepts of illusory worlds or any mid-way "city on high".

The Guru's philosophy is exemplified in his mystical writings that are truly interchanging warps and wefts of ethics, logic, aesthetics and metaphysics woven into masterpieces of silken rich poetry. The Guru's literary works are in Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil languages, and these works are of a conceptual and aesthetic quality at par with the Upanishads.

At the time of its conception, Naryana Guru's philosophy was in many respects ahead of its time and focused on a futuristic world order that could be shaped from his philosophical connotations that are underlain with transcendental aesthetics and logic embodied in knowledge and pure reason. Most of the serious scholars of Naryana Guru's philosophy have been from generations beyond his lifetime; and this list keeps growing.

Rationalism and Atheism: A message sent by Naryana Guru to *Sahodarasangham* during their annual conference-May 15, 1921.

Although Naryana Guru had built a number of temples and composed many poems in praise of popular Hindu deities, he had many atheist followers. This shows his love for humanity as a whole which is irrespective of any faith based affiliations. Many of his atheist followers in fact considered him as an atheist. For instance, one of his prominent disciples Sahodaran Ayyappan was a militant atheist and one of the founders of Yukthivadi,

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the first rationalist/atheist magazine in Malayalam. When Sahodaran Ayyappan modified Naryana Guru's famous catchphrase, *Oru Jati, Oru Matham, Oru Daivam Manushyanu* (One Caste, One Religion, One God for Humanbeing) and re-written it as *Jati Venda, Matham Venda, Daivam Venda Manushyanu* (No Caste, No Religion, No God for Human being), the latter did not protest.

Casteism prevalent amongst the Hindus even in the first half of 20th century was so rabid that uppercaste people refused to have food along with the people belonging to lower caste and "untouchable" communities. Hindu scriptures were profusely quoted by them to justify this practice. The Ezhava community in which Naryana Guru was born too was not immune to this barbaric practice even after half-a-century of Naryana Guru's work. When Sahodaran Ayyappan, inspired by Narayanaguru's message of caste-less and creed-less society, launched what is called *"Panthibhojanam"* or community feasts participating people belonging to various castes and communities, the Ezhava lords called him *"Pulayanaiappan"* (*Pulaya* was used as a derogatory term for having feast with the Pulayas, an "untouchable" community in the caste-hierarchy of Hinduism) and tried to forcibly prevent the feast.

It was in this context that Naryana Guru came out in support of Sahodaran Ayyappan and sent the message reproduced alongside. Translated into English, the message reads: *"Whatever be one's religion,* costume, language *etc, since their caste is the same, there is nothing wrong in having inter-marriages and community feasts".* It is this message of Narayanaguru which transgresses the established canons of Hindu religion (or any religion for that matter) that makes Narayanaguru a rationalist icon.

To avoid the attempts made by a section of his followers to identify him with the caste of the family he was born into, Naryana Guru was forced to state explicitly that he did not belong to any particular caste or religion. Through a message he sent in the year 1916, he proclaimed : *It is years since I left castes and religions. Yet some people think that I belong to their caste. That is not correct. I do not belong to any particular caste or religion.*

Some other prominent rationalist/atheist leaders, apart from Sahodaran Ayyappan, associated with Naryana Guru were M.C.Joseph, C.V.Kunhiraman and Mithavadi Krishnan.

Works

1. Swanubavageethi
2. Atmopadesa Zatakam
3. Advaitha Deepika
4. Arivu
5. Daiva Desakam
6. Jeevakarunya Panchakam
7. Anukamba Dasakam

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8. Jathi Nirnayam
9. Jathi Lakshanam
10. Sadacharam
11. Chijanda Chinthakam
12. Daiva Chintanam-1 & 2
13. Athma Vilasam

In Sanskrit

1. Darsana Mala
2. Brahmavidya Panchakam
3. Nirvruthi Panchakam
4. Slokathrayi
5. Vedantha Suthram
6. Homa Manthram
7. Municharya Panchakam
8. Ashramam
9. Dharmam
10. Charama Slokangal
11. Homa Mantram
12. Chidambarashtakam
13. Guhashtakam
14. Bhadrakaliashtakam
15. Vinayaka Ashtakam
16. Sree Vasudeva Ashtakam
17. Navamanjari

In Tamil

1. Thevarappathinkangal

Translations

1. Thirukural
2. Isavasyo Upanishad
3. Ozhivil Odukkam

Nitya Chaitanya Yati

Nitya Chaitanya Yati (Nithya Chaithanya Yati) (2 November 1923-May 14, 1999) was an Indian philosopher.

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He was born in Kerala, India, as the first son to Pandalam Raghava Panicker, a poet. After completing matriculation (the equivalent of today's high school education), Yati toured exstensively over what is now India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, befriending and subjecting himself to different religious figures.

He returned to Kerala in 1947 and joined University College, Aluva to study Philosophy and Psychology. He later taught these subjects in different universities.

In 1951, he accepted Nataraja Guru as his spiritual preceptor and after Nataraja Guru died, Yati became the Head of Narayana Gurukula. As Narayana Gurukula is a world community, Yati had to liaison between all members of the Gurukula at an interpersonal level in the teacher-student context and to make the Gurukula work in unison.

Nitya Chaitanya Yati published over 120 books in Malayalam and 80 books in English, as well as a number of articles on philosophy, psychology, social ethics and aesthetics. He was the founder-chairperson of the East-West University of Brahmavidya. He also worked as the Commissioner for World Education and as a sponsor of the World Government of World Citizens. World citizenship is a unique concept that Yati tried to give life to, in his own words:

> *"The term 'world citizen' can be better understood with a negative definition than with a positive one. If a citizen of a state with political frontiers is expected to pay allegiance to the government of the state to which he or she belongs and is expected to take arms against aliens who might invade the territory of the state, a world citizen recognizes the entire world as one's state and in principle does not recognize any member of one's own species as an alien to the world community to which oneself belongs. Such a person recognizes the earth as one's sustaining mother, the innate inviolable laws of nature as one's protecting father, all sentient beings as one's homes. The world citizen's allegiance is to the foundation of truth, the universality of knowledge and the fundamental ground of all values."*

In later days, he spent his time in an 'Ashram' (hermitage) in Ooty, in Tamil Nadu, India.

Swami Shivananda

Swami Shivananda Saraswati (Sep 8, 1887—Jul 14, 1963), as he is known under his monastic name, was born *KuppuSwami* in Pattamadai, Tamil Nadu, India. A Hindu by birth, he was a doctor, and a well-known proponent of Yoga and Vedanta. During his life he wrote over 200 books, on these and a variety of other subjects.

Early Life: Prior to entering into the life of Sannyasa, KuppuSwami the boy was promising in academics and gymnastics, before attending medical school in Tanjore, where he excelled. Upon graduation he practiced medicine and worked as a doctor in Malaysia for several years, with a reputation for waiving his fee for poor patients needing treatment.

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Over time, a sense that medicine was healing on a superficial level grew in him, urging him to look elsewhere to fill the void, and in 1923 he left Malaya and retuned to India to pursue a spiritual quest.

Travels: Upon his return to India he went on an extensive pilgrimage and travelled to meditate at holy shrines and study with spiritual teachers throughout India. Shivananda travelled the length and breadth of India during his Parivrajaka (wandering monk) life. He visited important places of pilgrimage in the south, including Rameshvaram. He conducted Sankirtan and delivered lectures. He visited the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and met Maharishi Suddhananda Bharati. At the Ramana ashram, he allegedly had the Darshan of Ramana Maharshi on Maharshi's birthday. He sang bhajans and danced in ecstasy with Maharshi's bhaktas. He also went on pilgrimages to Kailash-Manasarovar and Badri. At Banaras, he had the Darshan (vision) of Lord VishVanath.

Dr. KuppuSwami next went to Rishikesh where met his guru, Swami Vishwananda Saraswati. It was Vishwananda who initiated him into the Sannyas order and gave him his monastic name. However, since Swami Shivananda spent only a few hours with Swami Vishwananda, the full Viraja Homa ceremonies were performed later by Swami VishnudeVananda (not to be confused with his own later disciple, Swami Vishnu-deVananda), the Mahant of Sri Kailash Ashram.

Foundations: Shivananda performed austerities for many years but he also continued to help the sick. With some money from his insurance policy that had matured, he started a charitable dispensary at Lakshmanjula in 1927.

He returned to Rishikesh and in 1936 founded the new religious movement the Divine Life Society on the bank of the holy Ganges River. The free distribution of spiritual literature drew a steady flow of disciples to the Swami, including the young U.G. Krishnamurti, who studied with him for seven summers, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, founder of Satyananda Yoga.

In 1945, Swami Shivananda created the *Shivananda* Ayurvedic *Pharmacy*, and organized the *All-world Religions Federation*. In 1947 he established the *All-world Sadhus Federation*. He called his yoga the *Yoga of Synthesis*.

Shivananda Yoga: In 1957, after ten years of service to his Master, Swami Vishnu-deVananda was sent to the west to spread the teachings of yoga and Vedanta. According to stories, Shivananda placed 10 rupees in Vishnu-deVananda's palm, and simply said, "*People are waiting*". Vishnu-deVananda's efforts resulted in a great number of Shivananda institutes across the globe, bringing SiVananda's philosophy to a vast audience.

Authorship: He wrote a vast catalogue of books on Hinduism and Advaita philosophy, but also on other quite varied subjects, and how they intersected with his philosophy.

On the 14th of July 1963, in the words of his followers, the Great Soul Swami Shivananda entered MahaSamadhi (departure of a Self-realized saint from his mortal coil) in his Kutir on the bank of Ganges, in ShiVanandanagar.

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Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Paramahamsa Satyananda Saraswati (born 1923), is an important yoga master and guru in both his native India and the West.

He was born in the small Himalayan town of Almora, Uttar Pradesh. In 1943, at the age of nineteen, he met his spiritual master, Swami Shivananda, in Rishikesh. He took sannyasa and served his guru and The Divine Life Society for the following twelve years. For the next eight years he wandered through India, Afghanistan, Nepal, Burma and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), extending his knowledge of spiritual practices.

A respected master of Yoga Nidra and tantra, Swami Satyananda founded the International Yoga Fellowship in 1963 and the Bihar School of Yoga in the following year. He toured extensively, teaching yoga globally for the next twenty years, and authored a number of books. Hundreds of yoga teaching centres have been establishing under his name. In 1988 he retired from active involvement in yoga teaching and is now a patron of charitable institutions.

Bihar Yoga Bharati, the world's first university of yoga, was established under his guidance by his disciple Swami Niranjanananda in 1994. Swami Satyananda has trained thousands of yoga teachers and Sannyasins all over the world and is a well respected author of over 80 books of yoga and spirituality. Swami Satyananda's system of yoga is considered to be Integral yoga.

In 1988, he passed on the worldwide coordination of Satyananda Yoga to his disciple, Swami Niranjanananda

Nisargadatta Maharaj

Nisargadatta Maharaj (April 1897 – September 8, 1981) worked as a simple bidi seller in Mumbai (known formerly as Bombay) but was considered by many an enlightened being and a master of spirituality. Maharaj was world renowned and admired for his direct and informal teachings, a selection of which are in his most famous book I Am That, which has been translated into many languages. Nisargadatta is widely considered to be one of the 20th century's most articulate communicators of the Hindu school of Advaita Vedanta or nondualism, uniquely successful in making such previously diffuse ideas accessible to both eastern and western minds.

Although he had a Hindu background and upbringing, Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj's teachings have a universal appeal. His genius is in making abstract ideas clear to everyone. He explained that the purpose of advanced spirituality is to know who you are—simply that. Through his many talks given in his humble flat in the slums of Bombay, he showed a direct way in which one could become aware of one's original nature. Many of these talks were recorded, and form the basis of *I am That* and his other books. His words are free from cultural and religious trappings, and the knowledge he expounds is stripped bare of all that is deemed unnecessary.

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In the words of Advaita scholar Dr Robert Powell, "Like the Zen masters of old, Nisargadatta's style is abrupt, provocative, and immensely profound—cutting to the core and wasting little effort on inessentials. His terse but potent sayings are known for their ability to trigger shifts in consciousness, just by hearing, or even reading them."

Biography: Nisargadatta's father, Shivrampant, worked as a domestic servant in Mumbai and later as a petty farmer in Kandalgaon, a small village in the back woods of Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra.

At 18 Maruti's (given name) father died, prompting him and his brother to leave their family behind to find work in Mumbai (previously Bombay). Maruti found work as a small time clerk but quickly opened a small goods store mainly comprising of leaf-rolled cigarettes (bidis). In 1924 he married Sumatibai and they had three daughters and a son.

At the age of 34 Maruti was introduced to his future guru, Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj, the head of the Inchegeri branch of the Navnath Sampradaya by his friend Yashwantrao Baagkar. Maharaj "did not follow any particular course of breathing, or meditation, or study of scriptures." His guru told him to concentrate on the feeling "I Am" and to remain in that state.

Sri Siddharameshwar died three years later in 1936 and it was at this point that Maruti reached self-awareness, adopted the new name of Nisargadatta and inherited membership into the Navnath Sampradaya sect. He then took off to the Himalayas to further his understanding but eventually returned to his family in Mumbai. It was there that he spent the rest of his life, working as a bidi vendor and giving teachings in his home. His book "I Am That" achieved international success in 1973 with its first English translation. His new found "fame" brought him many new devotees from around the world.

Nisargadatta continued to receive and teach visitors in his home up to his death in 1981 at the age of 84 years.

Bob Adamson, [Stephen H. Wolinsky], Robert Powell, and Ramesh Balsekar are several of his followers who are still alive; they all teach the wisdom of and have written books about Sri Nisargadatta. A close friend of Sri Nisargadatta and fellow disciple of Sri Siddharameshwar, Ranjit Maharaj, taught in Mumbai, Europe, and the U.S.A. until his death in 2000.

Teachings: Nisargadatta's teachings are grounded in the Advaita Vedanta interpretation of the Hindu idea Tat Tvam Asi, literally "That Thou Art", meaning You are/are one with Divinity.

According to Nisargadatta, our true nature is perpetually free peaceful awareness, in Hinduism referred to as Brahman. Awareness is the source of, but different from the personal consciousness, which is related to the body. The mind and memory are responsible for association with a particular body, awareness is prior to both mind and memory. It is only the idea that we are the body that keeps us from living what he calls our "original essence", the True-Self, in Hinduism referred to as *Atman*.

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He describes this essence as pure, free, and unaffected by anything that occurs. He likens it to a silent witness that watches through the body's senses, yet is not moved, either to happiness or sadness, based on what it sees.

For Nisargadatta, the Self is not one super-entity which knows independently the things; there is no such super-entity, no Creator with infinite intellect, no God as such.

What is, is the "total act(functioning" of the Ultimate Absolute Reality (= Awareness/ Self) along the infinite varying forms in manifestation.

Nisargadatta also predicates the radical idea that there is no such thing as a "doer". According to him and other teachers of Vedanta, since our true nature or identity is not the mind, is not the body, but the witness of the mind and body, we, as pure awareness do nothing. The mind and body act of their own accord, and we are the witness of them, though the mind often thinks it acts. This is the very idea that keeps us from recognizing our Self, and Nisargadatta cautions:

"The life force [prana] and the mind are operating [of their own accord], but the mind will tempt you to believe that it is "you". Therefore understand always that you are the timeless spaceless witness. And even if the mind tells you that you are the one who is acting, don't believe the mind. [...] The apparatus [mind, body] which is functioning has come upon your original essense, but you are not that apparatus."

> *"Whatever movement, thought, or experience there is, can only occur on this consciousness. And you are prior to this consciousness; therefore you are neither the consciousness-that is, the instrument-nor any thought or experience, or whatever it is that is happening on that instrument. You are totally apart from it. Now stick to that."*
>
> *"When you will understand what this childhood is, then that is liberation. Paradoxically you will realize that you are already liberated... if you don't understand this consciousness itself then you are in bondage. You may do anything in the world but ultimately you are in shackles. The. .. child consciousness has to know the consciousness. It has to know itself... Everything is contained within the knowledge that you are a child, and all that will finally go. So your whole identity will disappear, including even that child identity, eventually..."*
>
> *"We are talking about the beginning of everything. It all began with childhood. Now that childhood is also a concept, and idea. So if you understand that, you transcend at once all concepts. That is why it is imperative to understand childhood. What is the function of childhood? Its function is for you to know that you exist. That is all it has done. Prior to that, you had no knowledge of the "I"-consciousness. My statement, and that of my guru, is that childhood is a 'cheat', it is false. The knowledge "I am" is itself a cheat. When the beingness appears, that love for existence is the result of maya, the primary*

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illusion. Once you come to know that you exist, you feel like enduring eternally. You always want to be, to exist, to survive. And so the struggle begins. All because of that maya."

"Whatever appears has really no existence. And whatever has not appeared also drops away; what remains is That, the Absolute."

"During your entire lifetime, you do not have any permanent identity. Whatever you consider yourself to be changes from moment to moment. Nothing is constant.... if you really want to understand this, you must give up your identification with the body. By all means, make use of the body, but don't consider yourself to be the body while acting in this world. Identify yourself with the consciousness, which dwells in the body... if you identify yourself with the body, you will feel that you are dying, but in reality there is no death because you are not the body. Let the body be there or not be there, your existence is always there... You should never forget the real identity that you possess. Consider a patient on his deathbed, certain to die. When he first comes to know of his disease, he gets such a shock that it is permanently engraved in his memory. Like that, you should never forget your true nature... One who is constantly awake in his true nature-having this knowledge about himself-is liberated."

"When one talks in terms of consciousness, one is likely to think in terms of an individual. But understand that it is not really the individual who has consciousness, but it is the consciousness that assumes innumerable forms... The average person will not understand this... because it is too simple! To grasp, one wants something, some form, some shape. [The concept that] 'something' is born and is going to die or disappear is all imagination, all an illusion-nothing is born."

"People have been coming here and I have been talking... because the life span has to be spent... so even that is merely entertainment. Something has to be done; this is entertainment-whilling away the time, the life span. The name is the giving of knowledge, but what is the game? A game of cards, entertainment. The name is spiritual knowledge, the game is cards... there is no doer at all, no one has an identity to do anything. In the field of consciousness, everything just happens."

Swami Lakshman Joo

Ishwar Swaroop Swami Lakshmanjoo Maharaj (1907-1991) was a famed mystic, scholar, and fully-realized saint in the tradition of Kashmir Shaivism. Born into an extremely wealthy Kashmiri family in Srinagar, Kashmir on May 9, 1907, he attained MahaSamadhi during the early hours of the 27th September, 1991 in NOIDA, New Delhi, Uttar Pradesh.

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Birth: Swami Lakshmanjoo's parents, Pundit Narayan Das Raina (father) and Srimati Arnyamali (mother) were ardent devotees of their family priest and guru, Swami Ram. After giving birth to a son and three daughters, the parents approached their guru and asked his blessing for another son. Swami Ram blessed a single almond and gave it to Swamiji's mother to eat. Nine months later, a boy was born. As soon as Swami Ram heard news of the birth, he became ecstatic and approached Swamiji's parents, proclaiming, "I am Ram; let the child be called Lakshman", in reference to the brothers Ram and Lakshman, whose story is told in the Ramayana.

Lineage: Swami Ram acted as Swamiji's guru, until Swamiji turned eight, at which point Swami Ram entrusted Swamiji to the tutelage of his chief disciple, Swami Mahatab Kak. It is believed that the lineage of gurus and shishyas that Swami Ram belonged to, which includes the illustrious AbhinavaGupta, originated from Shiva himself. It was Shiva in the form of Srikanthanatha who initiated Durvasa Rishi at the beginning of Kali Yuga. By the grace of Shiva and the watchful eye of the great Rishi Durvasa, this lineage shall remain unbroken till the end of this era.

Swami Chinmayananda

Swami Chinmayananda (May 8, 1916-Aug 3, 1993) was born Balakrishna Menon (Balan) in Ernakulam, Kerala in a devout Nair Hindu noble family called *"Poothampalli"*. Graduating from Lucknow University, he entered the field of journalism where he felt he could influence political, economic and social reform in India. But his life was changed when he met Swami Shivananda at Rishikesh and became interested in the Hindu spiritual path.

Balakrishna Menon took sanyas (monkhood) from Swami Shivananda to become Swami Chinmayananda—the one who is saturated in Bliss and Consciousness. Swami Shivananda saw the potential in Swami Chinmayananda and sent him to study under a guru in the Himalayas-Swami Tapovan Maharaj under whom he studied for 12 years. At the end of the education he decided to spread his teaching all over the world.

During his forty years of travelling and teaching, Swami Chinmayananda opened numerous centres and ashrams worldwide, he also built many schools, hospitals, nursing homes and clinics. As well as reinvigorating India's rich cultural heritage, he made Vedanta accessible to everybody regardless of age, nationality, or religious background.

Swami Chinmayananda died on 3 August 1993 in San Diego, California. His followers regard him as having attained MahaSamadhi at that point. His work has resulted in the creation of an international organization called the Chinmaya Mission.

> *"Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—*

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and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details."

— Swami Vivekananda

What Vedanta Teaches: In the highest sense, Vedanta means knowledge of God or the Absolute Reality, as recorded in the Upanishads, the final section of the Vedas. This knowledge is not acquired by education, nor by adherence to scripture. Instead, Vedanta declares that it is the goal and birthright of every individual to obtain this knowledge through direct experience. To reach this goal, Vedanta gives us principles which can guide us in our approach to life, in affirming that:

1. The universe is a manifestation of one Spiritual Reality.
2. Within each person this Divine Essence is at the core of his or her innermost being.
3. Thus human life becomes an opportunity to unfold and manifest this Divinity from within.
4. All religions are valid paths which can lead one to the realization of these truths.

Significance of Swami Vivekanada's Message Just as his master, Sri Ramakrishna had affirmed that each of the world's religious traditions offered true and valued paths for spiritual growth and realization, Swamiji held Vedanta as the foundation and uniting focus behind any spiritual effort. By applying the universal principles of Vedanta to one's own circumstance, one could become not only a better Christian, a better Jew, a better Hindu, and so forth, but a better *person* in every respect. Just as there is no one *true* religion which everyone must follow, neither is there one spiritual practice which is right for all. In the summary given above, Swami Vivekananda tells us we may use our natural tendencies to reach the Goal. He refers to what is called *The Four Yogas*, four broad highways of spiritual practice which address our need for physical activity (Karma Yoga), emotional expression (Bhakti Yoga), inquiry or knowledge (Jnana Yoga), and mental control (Raja Yoga).

Why Vedanta is Practical: Because they are based on Truth, which we can all experience, learning to live according to the principles of Vedanta might be considered the core and essence of practical Vedanta. When we try to live according to these teachings, they colour our approach to life. Thinking that the world is a manifestation of divinity, for example, can awaken within us a reverence and respect for Mother Earth and her resources. Similarly, if my own true nature is divine, the same divinity that is within you, then how I relate to you is transformed. The more we come to see the divinity within ourselves and others, the less important our apparent, or outwardly visible, differences become. Never let anyone say to you, "I can have the experience of my own divine nature, but you cannot." This notion that some can realize these Truths, and not all, cannot be! Being honest, we know it takes time—often lifetimes. But it is possible for each of us. More than just possible. According to Vedanta, to realize our own divinity is our highest purpose in life.

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Making Vedanta a Transforming Force in Our Life: We all begin by facing the same challenge: How do we make the these ideals genuine forces in our lives? We feel the truth of the teachings, and wish to build our life around them. However, as we encounter the demands of the world around us, we often find there is a gap between our ideal and how well we can apply it. Our sincerity is great, but our responses are not the ones we are aiming toward. Learning to apply the principles of Vedanta in our daily life is partly a function of our spiritual growth.

The more we realize the Truths illustrated in Vedantic teachings, the more these serve as our natural frame of reference. We can, however, assist in this process by developing a lifestyle which reinforces the ideals of Vedanta—driving a wedge, so to speak, to loosen the hold of our old thoughts and habits. Some ways to do to begin driving your wedge include: regular spiritual practices, studying the lives of saints and holy persons, reading spiritual texts, and talking with fellow aspirants.

Sri Sharada ***Devi's Example:*** In the life of Sri Sharada Devi we can see the principles of Vedanta applied in everyday living. This makes her example and teaching especially meaningful. As Sri Ramakrishna and Mother would say, we acquire the fragrance of spirituality by handling the flowers of holiness. May our consideration of Holy Mother imbue us with the scent of her wondrous Mother Heart!

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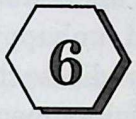

THE INSTITUTION OF SHANKARACHARYA

Shankaracharya, (IAST: *Zankarchrya*) is a commonly used title of heads of machas (monasteries) in the Advaita tradition. The title derives from Zankara of Kaladi, a theologian of Hinduism, who established four machas in the four regions of India. As the first historically recognized teacher in the lineage, Zankara is also called di Zankara (the first Zankara). The four institutions traditionally said to have been established by di Zankara are:

- The *Uttarmnya Matha*, or northern Matha at Joshimath.
- The *Pkrvmnya Matha* or eastern Matha, the Govardhana Matha, at Puri.
- The *Dakshinmnya Matha*, or the Sringeri Sharada Peetham, the southern Matha, at Shringeri.
- The *Pachimmnya Matha*, or the Dwaraka Pitha, the western Matha, at Dwarka.

The heads of these four institutions are considered the principal Shankaracharyas in India today. Kanchi Matha claims that Adi Shankara established it as the *Sarvagnya Peetha* in a position of supremacy over the other Mathas of the subcontinent, before his samadi. However this claim is disputed by the other four Peethams. In addition, the heads of the Sumeru Matha in Varanasi, the Karavir Matha in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, the Shankarananda Matha in Puri, Orissa and other institutions are also referred to as Shankaracharyas. There are more than 100 such Shankaracharyas in India today.

Vedanta: Highest spritual knowledge knowing which, there remains nothing further to be known. It is Self knowledge (*Atmavidya*). It is knowledge of the Absolute Truth (*Brahmavidya*). Vedanta teaches the real or essential nature of God, the universe, and the individual being (Self) and its oneness with God. The quintessence of the teachings of Vedanta is that Brahman (God) which is Existence, Consciousness and Bliss Absolute is the only Reality and that the universe is an illusory appearance like a mirage seen

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in a desert or a rope mistakenly seen as a snake, and that the individual being (self) is essentially Brahman or God Himself.

This oneness of the self (*Jiva*) with Absolute Consciousness (Brahman or God) is the goal of Vedanta. For want of the right understanding about his real nature, man remains deluded and considers himself limited, unhappy, miserable and beset with innumerable problems. Vedanta shows the way to eradicate these problems once and for all and enables man to attain the highest spiritual enlightenment, peace, happiness and freedom (*moksha*) from repeated births and deaths. Knowledge of the Self (*Atmavidya*) and knowledge of the Absolute Consciousness (*Brahmavidya*) is the highest knowledge to be obtained. It is the highest of all human pursuits.

The Jyotirmath Shankaracharya Lineage in the 20th Century

There is currently a succession dispute at the Jyotirmath Shankaracharya seat, the origin of which dates back to the year 1953. Till recently, the two major rivals were Swami Swarupananda Saraswati (who is also the Shankaracharya of Dwaraka in the west) and Swami Vasudevananda Saraswati. Since 1993-4, another Sannyasin named Madhava Ashrama has been a third claimant to the Jyotirmath title.

Background: Adi Shankaracharya (8th century) is traditionally said to have established four Mathas (monasteries) in India, and to have placed them under the leadership of his four chief disciples. The heads of these four and other monasteries of the Dasanami orders have come to be known as Shankaracharyas themselves, in honour of the founder. They are considered to be the leaders of the ten orders of the *Dasanami Sannyasins* associated with Advaita Vedanta.

The principal eastern (*Purvamnaya*), southern (*Dakshinamnaya*) and western (*Pascimamnaya*) institutions are based at Puri (Orissa), Sringeri (Karnataka) and Dwaraka (Gujarat) respectively. The northern (*Uttaramnaya*) Shankaracharya seat is at Jyotirmath (also known as Joshimath) near Badrinath. In addition to these four, there are numerous other Mathas throughout India, and the seven Dasanami *Akhadas* (Juna, Niranjani, Mahanirvani, Ananda, Atal, Avahan, Agni—the last is a Brahmacharin *Akhada*, not a Sannyasin one) that have their own separate administrations and leaders.

The history of Jyotirmath is extremely complicated. According to official accounts, after the period of one Swami Ramakrishna *Tirtha* in the 18th century, the Matha was extinct for about 165 years, before it was revived in 1941, under Swami Brahmananda Saraswati. However, in the meantime, various Sannyasins had claimed to be the Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath, and for some time, many people thought that the *Rawal* (head-priest) of the Badrinath temple was also the Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath.

There are records of lawsuits from the early 1900's, which show a number of names, each laying claim to the Jyotirmath Shankaracharya title. Before discussing the recent history of this institution, one issue must be properly understood. What does it mean for

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a Matha to have become extinct? In the traditional understanding, the answer is always with reference to the Mathadhipati, the head of the Matha. To say that a Matha has become extinct is to say that the lineage of successors has petered out, either because of confusions in the line of succession or because of lack of qualified people to lead the Matha.

The appointment of Swami Brahmananda Saraswati in 1941 was made by a group of monks and pundits based in Varanasi (the *Bharata Dharma Mahamandala*, *Kashi Vidvat Parishad*, and the *Akhila Bharatiya Dharmasangha*), with the blessings of Swami Bharati Krishna *Tirtha*, the then Shankaracharya of Puri. Swami Chandrasekhara Bharati of Sringeri also endorsed Brahmananda's appointment. Thus, right from the beginning of the Jyotirmath's revival in 1941, the opinions of the heads of other Amnaya Mathas were taken seriously into consideration.

Another important factor that legitimated the Jyotirmath revival should not be overlooked. This is the involvement of the Hindu kings in north India in the process, and their acceptance of Brahmananda Saraswati. The ruler of Garhwal was important because Badrinath was in his province, while the rulers of Varanasi and Darbhanga were well known and respected as patrons of several religious institutions. India was not yet independent in 1941, and this royal recognition helped in overcoming potential opposition from previous claimants to the Jyotirmath title, and their followers.

Brahmananda was selected as he was widely regarded as the epitome of the qualifications mentioned in texts like *Mahanusasana* and *Mathamnaya*, which are attributed to Adi Shankaracharya. For the purposes of this discussion, it is immaterial to investigate who wrote these texts, or to question whether Adi Shankaracharya established any Mathas at all. It is sufficient to note that the living tradition of Advaita monasticism more or less unanimously accepts these texts and the four Amnaya Mathas as originating from Adi Shankaracharya himself.

Beginnings of Conflict: Swami Brahmananda Saraswati passed away in 1953, but he had not clearly indicated his successor. This immediately caused a problem, as he had initiated a number of disciples into Sannyasa. A few weeks after he passed away, a will was found, according to the terms of which, a disciple called Swami Santananda Saraswati was named as the first choice for succeeding to the Jyotirmath title.

However, many followers of Brahmananda Saraswati were satisfied neither with the credentials of Santananda, nor with the validity/authenticity of the will. Perhaps, the doubts about the will were themselves based partly upon the perception that Santananda was not a good choice for successor. His quickness to take charge of the Matha administration on the basis of this will also probably raised many eyebrows. Meanwhile, there was a widespread rumour that Brahmananda Saraswati had been poisoned. This set a number of civil lawsuits into motion. To the best of my knowledge, no criminal lawsuits were filed against anyone, on the basis of the poisoning theory. However, Santananda's reputation

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definitely took a blow, although the major complaint against him was simply that he was unfit for the post of Shankaracharya, because he did not measure up to the qualifications described in the *Mahanusasana* texts.

Also, in 1953, Swami Hariharananda Saraswati (popularly known as Karapatri Swami), another disciple of Brahmananda Saraswati, was seen as the more deserving candidate to become the Shankaracharya, but he didn't want the title. In fact, as the head of the *Akhila Bharatiya Dharmasangha*, it is said that Hariharananda had been the first choice for the Shankaracharya post in 1941, but he had declined and proposed his guru's name (Brahmananda) instead. It is also said that it was Hariharananda who convinced his guru to accept the position. Hariharananda Saraswati passed away recently, and avoided the Shankaracharya title for himself, but the opinion of his followers is reflected in the title they have given him-*Abhinava Shankara*.

Divided Lineage: Because of the controversy over Brahmananda's will and Santananda's succession, the organizations involved in reviving Jyotirmath in 1941 considered other nominations for the Shankaracharya post. These efforts were blessed by Swami Abhinava Sacchidananda *Tirtha*, the then Shankaracharya of Dwaraka. In 1953 itself, one Swami Krishnabodha Ashrama was appointed as the new Jyotirmath Shankaracharya, contesting Santananda's claim.

Krishnabodha Ashrama was not a direct disciple of Brahmananda Saraswati, but given the nature of Jyotirmath's revival in 1941, this was not necessarily a disqualification. The new appointment also had the support of the Puri Matha, but it must be noted that this Matha was to have a few succession problems of its own, within a decade. When Krishnabodha Ashrama passed away in 1973, he nominated Swami Swarupananda Saraswati to the title. Swarupananda is a direct disciple of Brahmananda Saraswati, but he has also studied under both Krishnabodha Ashrama and Abhinava Sacchidananda *Tirtha* of Dwaraka. Meanwhile, Santananda had not relinquished the Shankaracharya seat, so that by this time, the two major claimants of the title were Swarupananda and Santananda.

In the year 1980, Santananda stepped down from the title, in favor of Swami VishnudeVananda Saraswati, another disciple of Brahmananda. However, VishnudeVananda Saraswati passed away in 1989/90, while Santananda Saraswati was still alive. Following this, one Swami Vasudevananda Saraswati was named as the successor. Santananda passed away in late 1997, and Vasudevananda Saraswati is currently the sole representative of this lineage. Vasudevananda was present at the appointment of a Mahamandaleswara of the Mahanirvani *Akhada* in 1995 (according to Hinduism Today, August 1995). Adding to the complexity of this dispute is the fact that according to the terms of Brahmananda's contested will, one Swami Dwarakesananda Saraswati was supposed to have been the second choice after Santananda. There is no indication that Dwarakesananda ever claimed the Shankaracharya title, or that it was ever formally

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offered to him. A similar situation obtains with a Swami Paramatmananda Saraswati, who was also named in the will, but as the next choice after VishnudeVananda.

It is difficult to ascertain the opinions of the heads of other institutions about this course of events. After the nomination of Krishnabodha Ashrama, the Puri and Dwaraka Mathas do not seem to have been involved in Jyotirmath affairs to any significant extent. In the south, Swami Chandrasekhara Bharati of Sringeri had been succeeded by his disciple, Swami Abhinava Vidya *Tirtha*, in late 1954.

Some official Sringeri accounts mention that the new Swami met Santananda Saraswati during his first northern tour in 1956/7, but this may not indicate that the Sringeri authorities differed from the Puri and Dwaraka authorities, with respect to endorsing Santananda. It remains unknown whether the Sringeri Shankaracharyas tried to mediate or took sides in the Jyotirmath dispute in this early period. However, in 1979, when a conference of the Shankaracharyas of the four Amnaya Mathas was held at Sringeri, Santananda and VishnudeVananda were not invited. It was Swarupananda Saraswati who represented Jyotirmath. There is no indication that the rival lineage of Santananda and his disciples was endorsed at this time by any of the other Shankaracharyas.

Accounts written by Swarupananda's followers do not mention Krishnabodha Ashrama very prominently, probably because he was not a direct disciple of Brahmananda Saraswati. Swarupananda, being a direct disciple of Brahmananda, traces his lineage directly to the ascetic who was the first Shankaracharya of the revived Jyotirmath. Needless to say, the list of Shankaracharyas of a Matha must be distinguished from the *Guru-Sishya* lineages of the Sannyasins who become Shankaracharyas. In an ideal situation, the lineages are identical, but circumstances often dictate otherwise.

Other major factors that affect this succession dispute are the relationships of the principals with Indian political parties and with internationally popular gurus. Swarupananda Saraswati's involvement with the Indian Congress party dates back to the period of the Indepedence struggle, before he became a Sannyasin. He remains close to numerous Congress politicians (*e.g.* Digvijay Singh of Madhya Pradesh and P. V. Narasimha Rao, the former Prime Minister of India), and has been quite vocally anti-VHP and anti-RSS.

In contrast, or perhaps because of this, Santananda, VishnudeVananda and Vasudevananda have all had the support of the "Hindutva" organizations. Vasudevananda is usually present at major VHP and RSS events, where he is introduced as the Jyotirmath Shankaracharya. Santananda and VishnudeVananda have also had close connections with Mahesh Yogi, who used to be Brahmananda Saraswati's secretary. In fact, the earliest doubts about the will left by Brahmananda Saraswati were linked to suspicion of the motives and actions of Mahesh Yogi (then called Mahesh Brahmachari). These TM connections probably did not endear Santananda and VishnudeVananda to the predominantly Brahmana following of the various Mathas. I have also heard rumours that

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when Santananda stepped down in favor of VishnudeVananda, there was the hand of Mahesh Yogi behind it. As with so many aspects of this dispute, I don't know if this is just rumour, or if there is something more to it.

It is well known that Swarupananda and Mahesh Yogi don't see eye to eye on any issue, and the *ex*-TM literature has much information about their disputes. However, the connection of Mahesh Yogi to Santananda and his lineal successors is not without its own complications. For example, Deepak Chopra, the popular New Age author, who used to have intimate ties to Mahesh Yogi and his organization, has now broken his connections to him, and claims acknowledgement directly from Vasudevananda Saraswati instead.

Other Candidates: Another Swami has claimed that he was once offered the Jyotirmath Shankaracharya title, which he respectfully declined. This is Prakasananda Saraswati, who has set up an "International Society of Divine Love" and a Rasesvari Radharani temple, known as Barsana Dham, in Texas, USA. Although he was initiated into Sannyasa by Brahmananda Saraswati, his personal religious philosophy is Achintya Bhedabheda, associated with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Gaufdiya Vaishnavas.

This leads me to seriously suspect his claim of having been offered the Shankaracharya post. Still, for the record, if his claim is valid, then we have two Swamis who have rejected offers to become the Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath, namely Harihararananda Saraswati and Prakasananda Saraswati. We should also not forget Dwarakesananda Saraswati, and Paramatmananda Saraswati, who were named in a contested will, but did not really get an opportunity to press their claims.

And if we dig deep enough, we will probably unearth more disciples of Brahmananda Saraswati, who were all potential candidates for the Shankaracharya position at one time or the other, which they all rejected. As an aside, a few relatively unknown, early Indian publications of the Transcendental Meditation movement claim the Shankaracharya title for Mahesh Yogi himself, but this is not to be taken seriously. While Mahesh Yogi was indeed one of the followers of Brahmananda Saraswati, he has never formally become a Sannyasin. Moreover, his international following probably obviates any need for him to claim the Shankaracharya title for himself now.

Swarupananda at Dwaraka: A further complication was introduced in 1982, when Abhinava Sacchidananda *Tirtha*, the Shankaracharya of Dwaraka, passed away, leaving a will with a few names as possible choices for his successor. Among these was Swarupananda Saraswati of Jyotirmath. The others either declined or were eliminated from consideration for one reason or the other. Swarupananda was then coronated at Dwaraka, in a ceremony presided over by Swami Abhinava Vidya *Tirtha* of Sringeri. Swarupananda Saraswati's Dwaraka title is undisputed, and he is routinely described in press reports as the Shankaracharya of Dwaraka.

However, it should be noted that while his status as the head of two principal Mathas is somewhat unusual, and also confusing for the lay public, it had not been insisted that

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he relinquish his position at Jyotirmath, before taking charge at Dwaraka. Swarupananda had attended the 1979 meeting of the Shankaracharyas at Sringeri, in his capacity as the Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath. He also attended the funeral ceremonies of Swami Abhinava Vidya *Tirtha* at Sringeri in 1989.

In June 1993, a joint statement was issued by the Shankaracharyas, in connection with the Babri Masjid demolition, which Swarupananda Saraswati signed twice, in his dual capacity as the head of both Dwaraka and Jyotirmath. And as Jayendra Saraswati of the Kanchi Matha has also signed the 1993 statement, I assume that he too accepts Swarupananda at both Dwaraka and Jyotirmath. Swarupananda has publicly stated that the Kanchi Matha is only a branch of the Sringeri Matha, but he did attend the birth centenary celebrations of Chandrasekharendra Saraswati of Kanchipuram in 1993.

It must be noted that the Kanchi Matha is a very influential institution today, and although it is not one of the four original institutions, the opinion of its head counts for something in these controversies. Indeed, the very presence of Jayendra Saraswati along with the heads of the four Amnaya Mathas is a marked change from the absence of the Kanchi Matha in the 1979 meeting of the Shankaracharyas, and is an acknowledgement of the current political importance of this institution. Clearly, at least in the eyes of these others, Swarupananda Saraswati is the Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath, and also the Shankaracharya of Dwaraka. However, Vasudevananda Saraswati's connections with the *Akhada Parishad* (a coordination body that deals with such matters as order of procession of the *Akhadas* during the Kumbha Mela, etc.) indicate that the Dasanami *Akhada* structure may not be unanimously supportive of Swarupananda.

Madhava Ashrama's Claim to the Title: There is a third claimant to account for, named Swami Madhava Ashrama, who is also a leading light of the *Akhila Bharatiya Dharmasangha*. This Sannyasin is a disciple of Krishnabodha Ashrama, whose name has been noted earlier. Madhava Ashrama's name crops up routinely in Nepali newspapers like The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal. He visited Nepal in 1997, for the 25th anniversary celebrations of King Birendra's accession to the throne. He also attended the Kumbha Mela in 1998, where he was injured in a riot.

Madhava Ashrama's claim to the Jyotirmath Shankaracharya title is based on the stance that after Swarupananda Saraswati took up the Dwaraka Shankaracharya title in 1982, his title at Jyotirmath has been nullified by the passage of time. Supporters of Vasudevananda's claim have also offered an identical argument. Madhava Ashrama does not recognize the claim of Vasudevananda Saraswati to the Jyotirmath title, as he traces his own claim to the title through his guru, Krishnabodha Ashrama, and to the decision of the *Kashi Vidvat Parishad* and the *Akhila Bharatiya Dharmasangha*.

According to his followers, in 1982 itself, Niranjanadeva *Tirtha* of Puri had requested Swarupananda to give up his Jyotirmath title in favor of another Sannyasin before taking up the Dwaraka Shankaracharya post. However, for more than a decade after assuming

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charge at Dwaraka, Swarupananda Saraswati had continued to retain his Jyotirmath title. It is said that in 1993-4, the *Kashi Vidvat Parishad* and the *Akhila Bharatiya Dharmasangha* decided that this was creating much public confusion, and decided to appoint Madhava Ashrama as the Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath. The coronation ceremony is reported to have been conducted in Varanasi itself. To summarize, the three competing Jyotirmath lineages are:

1. Brahmananda Saraswati (1941-1953; revived the Matha after a vacancy of 165 years)		
2. Santananda Saraswati (1953-1980, d. 1997)	2. Krishnabodha Ashrama (1953-1973; not a direct disciple)	
3. VishnudeVananda Saraswati (1980-1990; disciple of Brahmananda; predeceased Santananda)	3. Swarupananda Saraswati (since 1973; disciple of Brahmananda) (since 1997 [1990];	3. Swarupananda Saraswati (1973-1993/4 [1982])
4. Vasudevananda Saraswati disciple of Santananda)		4. Madhava Ashrama (since 1993/4; disciple of Krishnabodha Ashrama)
	Not including-Hariharananda (Karapatri), Dwarakesananda, Paramatmananda and Prakasananda.	

The Role of Other Traditional and Modern Institutions

The above discussion has dealt only with the cultural and religious aspects of the Jyotirmath dispute. A few centuries ago, such problems would have been referred to the local king, and perhaps solved quickly. In independent India, the dispute has been taken to the secular courts, but these are quite different from the old princely *durbars* in their procedures and rules. The judges also lack legislative and executive authority over religious institutions, unlike the Hindu king of old days.

It seems to me that those who did not wish to acknowledge Santananda as the Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath did not sufficiently appreciate these changes in modern times, and expected the courts to accept their cultural, moral and religious arguments as legally valid. Thus, none of the civil suits in this dispute seems to have been framed in terms of contesting the legal bona fides of Brahmananda's will. Consequently, although one judge did acknowledge the merits of the claim that Santananda was not properly qualified, he found no legally valid reason to give a verdict voiding Santananda's claim to the title.

In 1980, after Santananda abdicated in favor of VishnudeVananda, a new lawsuit was filed, on the grounds that according to Brahmananda's will, Dwarakesananda Saraswati should have been appointed in case Santananda stepped down. Thus, notwithstanding what was privately thought about the will and its legitimacy, its terms were co-opted, as a strategy to displace VishnudeVananda. However, the proverbial judicial delays in India played their role, and before this case was even heard, Dwarakesananda passed

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away. After VishnudeVananda also passed away, and Vasudevananda took charge, a fresh round of litigation was begun. The latest development from this angle is that on February 22, 1999, the court at Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, has passed an interim order, prohibiting Vasudevananda from using the title of Shankaracharya to collect any donations, till the legal case gets resolved either way.

The reasons cited for this order are that his installation is suspect, and that Swarupananda has the better claim to the Jyotirmath title, both for historical reasons and by virtue of being acknowledged by the other Shankaracharyas. Thus, notwithstanding the previous legal standing of Santananda at Jyotirmath, his disciple and successor seems to have suffered a legal setback at present.

According to currently applicable Indian law, which is itself based on pan-Indian tradition, a Mathadhipati has a right to choose his successor from among his disciples. In an ideal case, this right is vested solely in and exercised solely by the Mathadhipati, in accordance with the norms specified in texts like the *Mahanusasana*. However, given the history of this particular case, the involvement of two bodies external to Jyotirmath proper has to be duly noted. These are the *Kashi Vidvat Parishad* and the *Akhila Bharatiya Dharmasangha*.

It is agreed on all hands that the role played by members of these two organizations was a key factor in reviving the Jyotirmath in the year 1941. However, once Swami Brahmananda Saraswati was accepted as the Jyotirmath Shankaracharya, and there were no serious disputes about it at the time, further activities of these other institutions with respect to succession issues could be construed as unnecessary interference. Santananda and his successors trace their claim to a will of Brahmananda, but the *Kashi Vidvat Parishad* and the *Akhila Bharatiya Dharmasangha* have not accepted this. Interestingly, if the opinions of these bodies are to be set aside at any time after 1941, only the lineage of Vasudevananda (through Santananda) can be traced directly to Brahmananda, without any interruptions. However, it is precisely this lineage that seems to lack the necessary traditional support and that also seems to have now lost its previous legal standing.

Clearly, the role played by the *Kashi Vidvat Parishad* and the *Akhila Bharatiya Dharmasangha* was not questioned when Krishnabodha Ashrama was appointed to the Jyotirmath title, except perhaps by Santananda and his followers. As for the other Mathas and their heads, whatever their reservations may have been about Santananda's qualifications for the Shankaracharya title, their endorsement of Krishnabodha Ashrama's appointment and/or his subsequent appointment of Swarupananda meant that they tacitly approved of and accepted the actions of these two organizations.

Thus, both bodies got more firmly entrenched in matters relating to succession at Jyotirmath. Both Swarupananda Saraswati and Madhava Ashrama trace their claim to the Jyotirmath title through Krishnabodha Ashrama and *via* an acknowledgement of the right of the *Kashi Vidvat Parishad* and the *Akhila Bharatiya Dharmasangha* to decide

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the question of who would be the Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath. However, it could also be argued that these organizations have no right to unseat a Shankaracharya who is generally seen to be qualified for the post. Swarupananda was nominated by Krishnabodha Ashrama, but these two organizations seem to have had no objections against him, at least till 1982, when he took charge of Dwaraka also.

The decade-long gap between Swarupananda's accession to the Dwaraka title and Madhava Ashrama's appointment in 1993/4 also seems significant. If Madhava Ashrama's claim of having been appointed by these two bodies is correct, this only means that the *Kashi Vidvat Parishad* and the *Akhila Bharatiya Dharmasangha* have tried to exercise a right over Jyotirmath for the third time. In 1941, the rationale was the revival of an extinct institution. In the 1950's, the rationale was the controversy over Brahmananda's will. In the 1990's, it has been the confusion arising due to Swarupananda's acceptance of the Shankaracharya title at the Dwaraka seat.

As Madhava Ashrama's Jyotirmath Shankaracharya title is very much dependent upon the latest intervention by these two bodies, it is not too far off the mark to say that his claim to the title holds only so long as he enjoys their confidence. It is not at all inconceivable that a fourth competing lineage will be put forth in the future, if either Madhava Ashrama or his successor develops differences of opinion with the leaders of one of these organizations. Another possible scenario is that Madhava Ashrama could stand to lose, if either Swarupananda or Vasudevananda manages to win their support.

The major lawsuits involved in the Jyotirmath succession are still pending, either unresolved in the lower courts, or under appeal in the Allahabad High Court. The property of Jyotirmath is presently divided between Santananda's (now Vasudevananda's) camp and Swarupananda's camp. On the way to Badrinath, in the village of Joshimath, there are two separate establishments, respectively controlled by Vasudevananda and Swarupananda.

The two are quite near each other, each calling itself *the* official Jyotirmath. I am unaware if Madhava Ashrama and his supporters have filed any lawsuits against either Swarupananda or Vasudevananda or both. My personal opinion is that it would be extremely difficult to legally uphold a claim that one man cannot be the head of two different Mathas. Unless the permanent legal standing of the *Kashi Vidvat Parishad* and the *Akhila Bharatiya Dharmasangha* in matters of succession at Jyotirmath can be proved, Madhava Ashrama's claim seems to be the weakest, from all possible perspectives. It is also unclear whether Madhava Ashrama and his followers have been able to get established in the old Matha property.

However, in this dispute, possession of or jurisdiction over the Matha's property is not the criterion which decides the identity of the legitimate Shankaracharya. The primary issue is one of authenticity and/or authority of the disciple lineage. As may be expected, no side is willing to concede the Shankaracharya title to one of the other two. Both

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Swarupananda Saraswati and Madhava Ashrama seriously deny the authority of the entire lineage beginning with Santananda Saraswati.

However, Madhava Ashrama and Swarupananda Saraswati also question the legitimacy of each other, and Vasudevananda Saraswati denies the rights of both. No quick resolution of the dispute seems possible, but none of these three are very young in age. Unless there is a consensus candidate acceptable to all parties in the current dispute, reconciliation seems quite impossible. When any one of them passes away, or nominates another person to his own title while alive, he will simply transfer to the person of his successor all the associated disputes against the other two (and *their* respective successors).

In this century, there have been similar disputes and lawsuits in connection with the succession at Puri and Dwaraka also. In contrast, south Indian Mathas in the Advaita Vedanta tradition are relatively non-controversial in this regard. To begin with, the southern Shankaracharyas are very selective about whom they personally initiate as monks, and tend not to have a large retinue of Sannyasin disciples with them. Traditionally, at Sringeri, the current Shankaracharya carefully chooses and trains his successor, who therefore is in the public eye for at least a few years before assuming charge.

The senior Acharya also typically withdraws from public life, and lets the chosen successor handle administrative issues. Or else, just before his own passing, the Shankaracharya clearly names his unique choice of successor from among his own disciples. Kanchi and other southern Mathas also usually take similar caution about their succession. In cases of southern Mathas with a following hailing mainly from particular communities, but where the lineage has suddenly become extinct, *e.g.* the Shirali Chitrapura Matha associated with Saraswata Brahmanas in southern Karnataka, the succession is revived by other means, often with the help and support of other well respected Mathas. Puri, Dwaraka and Jyotirmath seem to operate by very different procedures. Matters of succession are left rather nebulous, or stated in a will, with a choice of candidates for the successor. More often than not, the will is contested, so that the succession soon becomes a highly charged political issue, and the lineages become more complicated than in the Wars of the Roses.

The Role of Royalty: The relationship of all these institutions with members of current and erstwhile royal houses continues to remain important. Madhava Ashrama's visits to Nepal are usually highlighted to buttress his claim. Reading the publications of his followers, one gets the distinct impression that the support of the King of Nepal is seen as a very important factor in legitimating Madhava Ashrama's claim to the Jyotirmath Shankaracharya title. Reciprocally, the King of Nepal is described as the "King of all Hindus in the world," presumably because he is the only legitimate Hindu monarch left today, even if his role within Nepal has been much reduced in recent times. The *Kashi Vidvat Parishad* is usually supported by the current "king of Varanasi," who is, I assume, also a leader of the *Akhila Bharatiya Dharmasangha*. The revival of Jyotirmath in 1941

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was facilitated by the role played by the then significant Hindu princes in north India. Members of India's erstwhile royalty continue to be important in Hindu religious institutions, even if their roles have become largely ceremonial, *e.g.* the Gajapati royal family in the Puri Jagannatha temple and the Travancore royal family in the TiruVanantapuram PadmanabhaSwami temple.

As for the other Mathas, in the pre-1947 era, administrative issues were routinely referred to the local rulers. For example, there are well documented records of the interactions of the Sringeri administration with various ruling houses, from the Vijayanagara emperors, many centuries ago, to the Mysore Wodeyars and Hyderabad Nizams, just before Indian independence. A large part of the rise of the Kanchi Matha to importance can be traced to the relationship that successive *Mathadhipatis* have maintained with the Maratha rulers of Tanjavur, the British administrators of Madras Presidency and the rulers of independent India.

Perhaps, all this is in keeping with the nature of generic Hindu religion, as ascetics are supposed to be supported mainly by householders, and the rulers are expected to uphold *dharma*. However, although Shankara describes the ascetic as an *atya'sramin* (one who is beyond all *Ashramas*), and asks rhetorically, "*katham varanasami bhavet?*," the situation of the contemporary Shankaracharyas is considerably more complicated. Ideally, a Mathadhipati pursues only other-worldly concerns, as he is first and foremost a monk.

In the Advaita tradition, he is also eventually expected to transcend all concerns of both this world and the next. However, a Matha is a social institution, and has one foot firmly planted in this world. The coronation of a Shankaracharya as the head of a Matha is called a *Pattabhisheka*, and closely resembles that of a classical Hindu king. Therefore, when the very issue of who is the legitimate Mathadhipati is confused or controversial, the realities of this world take centre-stage. Certainly, ever since Swami Vidyaranya's celebrated involvement with the Vijayanagara empire in the 14th century, and possibly from even earlier times, the Shankaracharyas and their Mathas have not been strangers to rulers of India and their politics.

It could be argued that the leaders of the Dasanami Sannyasin tradition have not woken up to the constitutional reality of democratic India, and that they continue to expect outmoded patterns of social behaviour, and that they continue to give undue importance to old royal dynasties. On the other hand, it could also be argued that this is simply one manifestation of a larger reality in India, whose new rulers have succeeded only in establishing modern political dynasties in place of the old royal ones. In any case, the current interactions among politicians, erstwhile royal houses and Sannyasins, as also disputes over which Sannyasin is a legitimate Shankaracharya, can be understood only along the lines of age-old *brahma-kshatra* relationships.

A Review of Cenkner's Work: In connection with the Shankaracharya tradition, Prof. Harzer-Clear mentions William Cenkner's book "A Tradition of Teachers", published by

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Motilal Banarsidass (1983). While Cenkner makes some valid observations about the inherent strengths and weaknesses of the Shankaracharya tradition, he is simply unreliable when it comes to factual details.

What his introduction calls the "inclusive tradition" of the Kanchi Matha is in fact a highly contested claim within the Dasanami tradition, with the potential to cause a deep schism. As for the Jyotirmath succession controversy, it has always been a matter of public knowledge in India, both because of the close physical proximity of the two separate establishments at Joshimath and because of the fact that all the people involved are public figures. Cenkner is astoundingly silent about it, and if he were to be believed, there is just no succession dispute at all, so that Santananda's position at Jyotirmath is unquestioned. He also specifically mentions the succession disputes at Dwaraka and Puri in this century, but strangely enough, he mentions a controversy where none existed, namely at Sringeri. Cenkner tells us that Niranjanadeva *Tirtha*'s coronation as the Shankaracharya of Puri in 1964 was conducted in the presence of the Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath, but neglects to inform us that this was Krishnabodha Ashrama, not Santananda.

Cenkner is also aware of the 1979 conference of the four Shankaracharyas, but seems unaware that it was Swarupananda, not Santananda or VishnudeVananda, who was described as the Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath then. Cenkner's 1995 edition seems to be a reprint of the 1983 edition, and although he has provided a fresh preface, which mentions Swarupananda Saraswati's name, he still does not mention the Jyotirmath succession dispute. One is left with the impression that even as late as 1995, Santananda's position as Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath remained undisputed. Cenkner's silence regarding this dispute is extremely surprising, and he is either astoundingly naive or one has to suspect an unbecoming bias on his part.

Cenkner goes on to describe Santananda Saraswati as the head of all Dandi Sannyasins. This is extremely misleading, to say the least. There is no one head of all these Sannyasins. The heads of the Puri Matha have traditionally been Dandi Sannyasins, so that the Puri Shankaracharya might as well be described as their head. The Dwaraka and Sringeri Shankaracharyas, who are Paramahamsa Sannyasins, nominally the highest rank among the Dasanamis, would each have a better claim to being the overall head.

Moreover, in spite of the affiliation of all *Dasanami Sannyasins* with the four Mathas at Sringeri, Puri, Dwaraka and Jyotirmath, the Dasanami *Akhadas* are more important throughout north India, with numerous Mahamandaleshwaras, each with his own significant following. Even if there were no dispute about the Jyotirmath succession, Santananda's description as the head of all Dandi Sannyasins would be rather inaccurate. And the endorsement of Swarupananda by the Puri and Sringeri Mathas would make Santananda's claim (and now Vasudevananda's claim) even more tenuous. It may be added that acrimonious disputes about succession within one Matha and about the relative importance of the various Mathas are not limited to recent history. There are records of such disputes

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dating back to the 17th century and earlier. Often, such disputes are also accompanied by philosophical and doctrinal differences, so that a study of these would offer significant clues to the development of the post-Shankaran traditions of *Dasanami Sannyasins* and Advaita Vedanta. Cenkner seems completely blind to such crucial features of the Shankaracharya tradition, and this is because his historical research leaves much to be desired.

Appendix: Since the above discussion has repeatedly mentioned the names of some of the other Shankaracharyas in India, here is some information about their lineages. Only the 20th century is covered. Dates given here are dates of accession to the title, not the date of initiation into Sannyasa. It should be noted that there were succession controversies in both Puri and Dwaraka Mathas in the 19th century.

Puri (Purvamnaya)

- Shankara Madhusudana *Tirtha* (up to 1925)
- Bharati Krishna *Tirtha* (1925-1960)-He was the *Dwaraka* Shankaracharya till 1925. In 1921, Bharati Krishna *Tirtha* was prosecuted by the British Indian Government, for his involvement in the freedom struggle and his support of the Khilafat movement. He is also the author of a book called *Vedic Mathematics* and is the only major Shankaracharya to have travelled outside the subcontinent.
- Yogeswarananda *Tirtha* (1960-1961)-He passed away shortly after assuming charge, and without nominating a successor. He also wrote a book called *Mantra-Sastra*, published posthumously. His name is not included in the current list. Period of litigation-1961-1964. See the *Dwaraka* list below.
- Niranjanadeva *Tirtha* (1964-1992)
- Nischalananda Saraswati (since 1992)-Niranjanadeva stepped down in 1992.

Sringeri (Dakshinamnaya)

- Sacchidananda Sivabhinava Narasimha Bharati (up to 1912)-He is credited with having rediscovered the village of Kalati in Kerala, the birthplace of Shankara, and with instituting the current practice of observing the *Shankara Jayanti* celebrations.
- Chandrasekhara Bharati (1912-1954)-Author of a commentary on *Vivekachudamani*. An English translation has been published from the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.
- Abhinava Vidya *Tirtha* (1954-1989)
- Bharati *Tirtha* (since 1989)

Dwaraka (Pascimamnaya)

- Trivikrama *Tirtha* (until 1921)

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- Bharati Krishna *Tirtha* (1921-1925)-See entry under *Puri* above.
- Swarupananda *Tirtha* (1925-??)
- Yogeswarananda *Tirtha* (??-1945)-Also see the *Puri* list above.
- Abhinava Sacchidananda *Tirtha* (1945-1982)-He played a major role in succession issues at *Puri* and **Jyotirmath**. He also established the *Adi Shankara Kaivalya Dhama* near Kedarnath.
- Swarupananda Saraswati (since 1982)

The Amnaya Mathas

The four *Mathas* established by Shankara are known in the tradition as the *amnaya Mathas*. Shankara is said to have assigned one of the four vedas to each of these *Mathas*, and the Acharyas and panditas of these four *Mathas* continue the tradition to this day. Accordingly, the Puri Matha is associated with the Rig veda, Sringeri with Yajurveda, Dvaraka with sama veda and Jyotirmath with atharva veda. The ten Dasanami suffixes are distributed among these four *Mathas*-according to most traditions, *puri, Bharati* and *Sarasvati* with Sringeri; *Tirtha* and *ashrama* with Dvaraka; *Sagara, Parvata* and *Giri* with Jyotirmath, and *Vana* and *Aranya* with Puri. Many notable post-Shankaran authors, including Suresvara, Jnanaghana, Jnanottama, Anandagiri, Bharati *Tirtha*, Vidyaranya and others, can be found among the heads of these *Mathas*.

Of these four, Sringeri is the only institution that has had an unbroken line of succession from Shankara. Among the other three *Mathas*, the succession has been interrupted at one time or the other, for a variety of historical reasons. The longest hiatus in the line of succession was in the case of Jyotirmath, where the seat lay vacant for around 165 years. In the recent past, the Sringeri *Matha* has been involved, directly or indirectly, in stabilizing the line of succession in the other three *Mathas*.

From L to R: Sri Svarupananda Sarasvati (Jyotirmath), Sri Abhinava Vidya *Tirtha* (Sringeri), Sri Niranjana Deva *Tirtha* (Puri), Sri Abhinava Sacchidananda *Tirtha* (Dvaraka)-Meeting at Sringeri in 1979.

The successor to the title in a *Matha* is usually nominated by the presiding Shankaracharya of that *Matha*. It is quite normal to see Shankaracharyas who have become *Sannyasis* directly from the student life, without ever having been *grihasthas*. This is especially the norm in the Sringeri lineage. Thus, a Shankaracharya can be a very young man, sometimes barely out of his teens, when he takes charge at his *Mathas*. On the other hand, the Puri lineage has seen many heads who have become *Sannyasins* quite late in their lives, after passing through the *Grihastha* stage.

In cases where a Shankaracharya passes away without nominating a successor, or if there is a dispute about the succession, the head of one of the other *Mathas* is consulted to resolve the issue. Within this century itself, there have been instances where the Shankaracharyas of Sringeri, Dvaraka, and Puri have been called upon to resolve succession

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issues in one of the other *Mathas*. The Sringeri lineage names thirty-six successors to the Shankaracharya title, while Dvaraka has about seventy. The Puri list of Shankaracharyas has more than 140 names to date. The larger number of names in these two lists is probably because many of the presiding Shankaracharyas have been former *grihasthas*, who took charge at a comparatively older age and consequently held charge for shorter periods. The line of the Jyotirmath has many gaps in it, an unfortunate circumstance of history.

The position of the Shankaracharyas in modern Hinduism has often (quite wrongly) been compared to that of the Pope in Roman Catholicism. The four Shankaracharyas do not issue catechisms for all Hindus, nor do they claim sole right to decide on doctrinal issues. *Sri-mukhams* issued by the *Mathas* are very different in nature from papal bulls or encyclicals, and unlike the Vatican City, the four *Mathas* do not enjoy sovereign status. Rather, they are governed by the federal and state laws on religious and charitable trusts and endowments in independent India, and are often answerable to governmental bodies.

However, this should not be construed to mean that the Shankaracharyas are insignificant or that their importance is overrated. They are held in high respect by almost all sections of Hindus, but they also tend to get blamed by the modern media, somewhat unfairly, for everything that goes wrong in Hindu society! For all that, however, the Shankaracharyas generally lead quiet, secluded lives, as befits monks, and tend to avoid media attention. There are, of course, exceptions to this norm, and recent developments in India, especially the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue, have forced all of them to take more active roles in public life.

Recent History of the Four Amnaya Mathas

Sringeri

Sri "Ugra" Narasimha Bharati (1817-1878) was well-known throughout India as a very saintly personality. He travelled far and wide, and had disciples all over India and even in Sri Lanka. He was succeeded by Sri Sacchidananda Sivabhinava Narasimha Bharati (1878-1912), who rediscovered Kaladi, Adi Shankaracharyas birth-place, and instituted Shankara Jayanti celebrations all over India. He also arranged for the publication of a comprehensive collection of Shankara's works, and initiated the practice of having the various Shankaracharyas meet for informal discussion and decision making. Following his lead, meetings took place at Kaladi, Hardwar, Prayag, etc. His successor, Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati (1912 to 1954), was an acclaimed *jivan-mukta.*

He wrote a commentary to Shankara's *Viveka-chudamami*. The first meeting of all four Shankaracharyas (*chaturamnaya-sammelanam)* in the 1200 year old tradition of post-Shankaran Advaita, took place at Sringeri, in 1979, under the leadership of Sri Abhinava Vidya *Tirtha* (1954-1989). Sri Bharati *Tirtha*, the presiding Shankaracharya of Sringeri, succeeded to the title in 1989. The Shankaracharyas of the four *amnaya*

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Mathas and the head of the Kanchi *Matha* held another conference at Sringeri in 1993, following the events of December 1992 at Ayodhya, to express their concern at the politicization of religious issues, and resolved to lead a non-political effort to solve the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue amicably.

Dvaraka

Sri Trivikrama *Tirtha* was the head of the Dvaraka *Matha* till the year 1921. He was succeeded by Sri Bharati Krishna *Tirtha*, who had a very interesting career. Beginning as a student of Vedanta at Sringeri, he became a Sannyasin under Sri Trivikrama *Tirtha* of Dvaraka, and succeeded to the Shankaracharya post at Dvaraka, in 1921. Soon after the first world war, he was prosecuted along with the Ali brothers and other Muslim leaders, by the colonial British government for treason, in connection with his involvement in the Indian Independence movement, and his support of the Khilafat movement. He is also said to have discovered some ancient *sutras* of basic arithmetic, which have been published as a book, under the title "Vedic mathematics". He was asked to take over the Puri *Matha* in 1925, when that seat fell vacant.

Accordingly, Sri Svarupananda *Tirtha* and Sri Yogesvarananda *Tirtha* followed at the Dvaraka seat. In the year 1945, Sri Abhinava Sacchidananda *Tirtha* was nominated as the Shankaracharya of Dvaraka, with Sri Bharati Krishna *Tirtha* performing the installation ceremonies. Before taking over at Dvaraka, Sri Abhinava Sacchidananda *Tirtha* was the head of the Mulabagal *Matha* in Karnataka. This was an old branch of the Dvaraka *Matha*, established in the 17th century, and with his appointment to the Dvaraka seat, the collateral lineage of Mulabagal *Matha* was merged with that of Dvaraka.

In later years, he was called upon to mediate the succession issues at both Puri and Jyotirmath. He also renovated the *Samadhi* site of *adi* Shankara at Kedarnath with assistance from the government of Uttar Pradesh. He passed away in 1982, following which Sri Svarupananda Sarasvati of Jyotirmath assumed charge at Dvaraka. Sri Abhinava Vidya *Tirtha* of Sringeri consecrated his appointment, and Sri Svarupananda has held dual charge at both Dvaraka and Jyotirmath since then.

Puri

This *Matha* is historically connected with the famous Jagannatha temple in Puri. It is also called the Govardhana *Matha*, and has an important branch in Puri itself, called the Shankarananda *Matha*. In the beginning of the century, the head was Sri Shankara Madhusudana *Tirtha*. Sri Bharati Krishna *Tirtha*, who was then at Dvaraka, took over as the Shankaracharya of Puri in 1925. Sri Bharati Krishna *Tirtha* visited the USA in the 1950's, at the invitation of the Self-Realization Fellowship. During this time, Sri Shankara Purusottama *Tirtha* supervised the Puri *Matha* on his behalf. After Sri Bharati Krishna *Tirtha* passed away in 1960, he was succeeded by Sri Yogesvarananda *Tirtha*, whose period was quite short, as he passed away in 1961. This lead to a brief period of

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uncertainty during which the succession at the *Matha* was being litigated. In 1964, Sri Niranjana Deva *Tirtha*, who was one of the nominees named in Sri Bharati Krishna *Tirtha*os will, was consecrated at the Puri seat by Sri Abhinava Sacchidananda *Tirtha* of Dvaraka. Sri Niranjana Deva *Tirtha* is known for his unpopular political views on volatile issues affecting Hindu people, like sati and cow protection. In 1992, he stepped down after nominating Sri Nischalananda Sarasvati as his successor, who is currently in charge at Puri.

Jyotirmath: Also known as Joshimath, it is located near Badrinath in the Himalayas, because of which it is also known as the Badrinath *Matha*. After a long hiatus of 165 years, this *Matha* was revived in the year 1941, under Sri Brahmananda Sarasvati, a disciple of Sri Krishnananda Sarasvati, who was originally from Sringeri. The appointment was made by a committee of pundits from Varanasi, and Sri Brahmananda's accomplishments helped re-establish the Jyotirmath as an important centre of traditional Advaita teaching in northern India. When he passed away in 1953, Sri Santananda Sarasvati succeeded him at this seat, according to the terms of a will. However, there was a dispute regarding the capacity of Sri Santananda for the title and also about the validity of this will. This resulted in a major controversy that remains unresolved.

Karapatri Swami (Hariharananda Sarasvati), a well-known disciple of Sri Brahmananda, was asked to take over the Jyotirmath title, but he declined. To resolve the dispute, another committee of pundits from Varanasi was formed, under the guidance of Karapatri Swami and Sri Abhinava Sacchidananda *Tirtha* of Dvaraka. Sri Krishnabodhashrama was appointed as the new head of the *Matha*. When he passed away in the early 1970's, he nominated Sri Svarupananda Sarasvati, another disciple of Sri Brahmananda, as his successor. Sri Svarupananda continues as the Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath, and has also been in charge of Dvaraka since 1982.

Some people consider the rightful succession of the Jyotirmath title to be along the disciple line of Sri Santananda Sarasvati. He is said to have retired in 1980, in favor of his disciple, Sri VisnudeVananda Sarasvati, who has since passed away. Sri Santananda also passed away in December 1997, and has been succeeded by Sri Vasudevananda Sarasvati. Thus, there are at least two separate lineages at Jyotirmath currently, although it is Sri Svarupananda Sarasvati who is endorsed by the other *Amnaya Mathas*.

There is a third ascetic, named Sri Madhavashrama, who is another claimant to the Jyotirmath title, who contests both the claims of Sri Svarupananda and Sri Vasudevananda. Sri Madhavashrama is a disciple of Sri Krishnabodhashrama, who was nominated to the Jyotirmath title in the 1960's. His contention is that Sri Svarupananda cannot be accepted as the head of two different *amnaya Mathas* (Dvaraka and Jyotirmath), so that the Jyotirmath title has to revert to another disciple of Sri Krishnabodhashrama. According to publications supporting his claim, he was anointed in 1993 or 1994, under the guidance of Sri Niranjana Deva *Tirtha*, the former Shankaracharya of Puri. Thus, the dispute

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between two parties for the title of Jyotirmath Shankaracharya has now become a dispute among three different parties.

Other Mathas: Other than the four *amnaya Mathas*, there are a number of well-known *Mathas* owing allegiance to *Advaita* and the Shankaracharya lineage. Many of them were originally branches of one of the four *amnaya Mathas*, established officially by the parent *Matha*, and which grew into more or less independent institutions over time. Notable among these are the branch *Mathas* at Kumbhakonam, Sankhesvar, Kudali, Virupaksha (Hampi), Kolhapur (Karavir pitham), Sivaganga, Sakatapuram, etc.

In recent times, the *Matha* at Kanchipuram has been very active. Sometimes, notable *Sannyasis* of the *dasanami* order start their own *Mathas*, to cater to the spiritual needs of their followers. An example is the famous Upanisad Brahmendra *Matha* at Kanchipuram, which was founded in the 18th century by Ramachandrendra Sarasvati. Sometimes, succession controversies (as in the present Jyotirmath) also leads to the establishment of separate *Mathas*. A few *Mathas* of the *Nambudiri* community in Kerala also trace their foundation to Shankara himself, as do the sumeru and *Paduka Mathas* in Varanasi. However, the Kavale *Matha* of the *Gauda sarasvata* community in Goa traces its origin in 740 CE not to Shankaracharya, but through another disciple of Govinda Bhagavatpada.

In general, the various *Mathas* in India operate quite independent of one another. The Shankaracharya of the four original *Mathas* do not normally interfere with one another, nor do they seek to exercise any control, administrative or spiritual, on any of the other *Advaita Mathas* in India, unless specifically requested to do so. Although their heads are *Sannyasis* who lead completely detached lives, the *Advaita Mathas* are not immune to contemporary social and political pressures. Some *Mathas* deal with these pressures better than others. Manifestations of these pressures can be seen in the sometimes acrimonious rivalries between followers of two different *Mathas*, as also in the recurrent succession disputes in some of them. Such succession disputes sometimes lead to protracted litigation and the establishment of independent *Mathas* elsewhere.

Modern Institutions: In addition to the more traditional *Advaita Mathas* and *akhadas*, various *Sannyasis* of the *dasa-nami* order have established some of the more well-known modern institutions, like the Ramakrishna Math and Mission (Swami Vivekananda), the Self-Realization Fellowship (Paramahamsa Yogananda), the Divine Life Society (Swami Shivananda), Yoga Vedanta Centre (Swami VishnudeVananda), the Chinmaya Mission (Swami Chinmayananda), and others. Among these, the founders of the Ramakrishna Mission, the Divine Life Society and the Chinmaya Mission trace their spiritual descent through the Sringeri *parampara*.

The Self-Realization Fellowship has links to the Puri *parampara*. These organizations usually teach some variant or the other of *Advaita-Vedanta*, generally combined with yoga practice, or an acceptance of the prophets of the Semitic religions, and/or an emphasis

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on social service. These modern institutions tend to have as much a presence in the West as in India, and their ideologies have come to be called by the generic name of neo-*Vedanta*. It remains to be seen whether these institutions will be the catalysts for the growth of a truly universal philosophy/religion that has been a dream of most of their founders.

There have been countless other nameless, realized masters over the centuries, who have realized the non-dual *Brahman*. As a living tradition of philosophy and religion, Advaita is not always restricted to *dasa-nami Sannyasis* in the lineage of Shankaracharya. For example, within the 20th century CE, one has the example of the famous mystic Sri Ramana Maharishi (1879-1950), who did not formally take *sannyasa*, but was nevertheless a *Jivanmukta*, who taught pure Advaita.

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GLOSSARY

Advaita: Non-duality; a school of Vedanta philosophy that teaches the oneness of God, soul and universe. The chief exponent of Advaita Vedanta (Non-dualistic Vedanta) was Shankaracharya (A.D. 788-820).

Ahimsa: Non-violence, non-maliciousness, inoffensiveness.

Ashrama: Hermitage, a residential institution especially a spiritual or religious one.

Also means the four stages of human life, 25 years each, prescribed by the Vedantic scriptures:

1. Brahmacharya—the celibate student stage
2. Grihasthya—the married householder stage
3. Banaprastha—the stage of retirement and contemplation
4. Sannyas—the stage of religious mendicancy

Atman: The Self or Soul; denotes both the Supreme Soul and the individual soul, which, according to Non-dualistic Vedanta are ultimately identical.

Avatara or Avatar: The descent on earth of a Hindu deity, especially, Vishnu; an Incarnation of God on earth in human form; an embodiment or concrete manifestation of an abstract concept; a leader who is regarded as or professes to be a savior or liberator. Hindus, however, believe that God incarnates Himself many times—Sri Krishna declares in the Bhagavad-Gita (IV-8): "In every age I come back to deliver the holy, to destroy the sin of the sinner, to establish righteousness."

Bengali: The language spoken by the people of the state of West Bengal (India) and Bangladesh.

Bhagavad-Gita: "The Song of God"—a sacred scripture of the Hindus, one of the basic texts of the Vedanta and the Yoga philosophy the other two being Upanishads, and the Brahma-Sutra).

Bhagavatam or Srimad Bhagavatam: A well—known Hindu scripture dealing mainly with the life of Sri Krishna.

Bhakti: Love of God, devotion.

Bhakti Yoga: The path of devotion followed by dualistic worshippers.

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Banaprastha: The third of the four stages of human life prescribed by the Vedantic scriptures:

1. Brahmacharya—the celibate student stage
2. Garhasthya—the married householder stage
3. Banaprastha—the stage of retirement and contemplation
4. Sannyas—the stage of religious mendicancy

Brahma: The Creator God; the First of the Hindu Trinity, the other two being Vishnu (Preserver) and Shiva, or Shiva (Destroyer).

Brahmachari: A celibate student devoted to the practice of spiritual discipline; one who follows the first stage of life.

Brahmacharya: The first of the four stages of human life prescribed by the Vedantic scriptures:

1. Brahmacharya—the celibate student stage
2. Garhasthya—the married householder stage
3. Banaprastha—the stage of retirement and contemplation
4. Sannyas—the stage of religious mendicancy

Brahman: Godhead. The Absolute, the Supreme Reality, the Ultimate Reality, Truth or the Self of the Vedanta Philosophy are also used interchangeably for Brahman.

Brahma-Sutra: One of the three sacred texts of the Vedanta and the Yoga philosophy (the other two being the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad-Gita), in which its author Badarayana-Vyasa compiles together the leading concepts of Vedanta in an orderly manner.

Brahmateja: The glow that surrounds a holy person.

Brahmin: The priestly caste of the four castes in the Hindu Society.

Brahmo: Member of the Brahmo Samaj, a theistic organization of India founded by Raja Rammohan Roy.

Buddha: Prince Siddhartha or Shakyamuni—the founder of Buddhism. Lit. one who is enlightened.

Chaitanya: Fifteenth century prophet who lived in Navadvip (Bengal, India) and preached the path of divine love or Bhakti for the realization of God.

The word also means 'spiritual consciousness'.

Cossipore: Northwestern suburb of Calcutta where Sri Ramakrishna was moved from Dakshineshwar for the treatment of throat-cancer and where he passed into mahaSamadhi on Aug 16, 1886.

Cyber Space: Cyber space can be defined as the "virtual space created" by interconnecting human beings via the computer and telecommunication technologies without regard to their physical locations.

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Cybernetics: The field of study of communication and control processes in biological, mechanical and electronic systems.

Dakshineshwar: The temple of Kali, the Divine Mother, in the village of Dakshineshwar, north of Calcutta where Sri Ramakrishna lived most of his adult life.

Daya: compassion.

Dharma: Righteousness, duty; the inner constitution of a thing which governs its growth.

Durba: Common grass used in Hindu worship.

Grihasthya: The second of the four stages of human life prescribed by the Vedantic scriptures:

1. Brahmacharya—the celibate student stage
2. Garhasthya—the married householder stage
3. Banaprastha—the stage of retirement and contemplation
4. Sannyas—the stage of religious mendicancy

Ghat: A boat-landing stage or bathing-place on the bank of a river, lake, or a pond.

Gunas: Literally means qualities or attributes. According to the Samkhya philosophy, Prakriti (nature), in contrast with Purusha (soul), consists of three gunas known as sattva, rajas, and tamas. Anything we see, hear, smell or feel in the physical universe is the result of these three gunas in different proportions.

Guru: Spiritual teacher; an expert in any field of knowledge.

Hari: God—in common parlance; a name of Vishnu.

Holy Mother: Sri Sharada Devi—Sri Ramakrishna's wife and his Divine Consort—the name by which she was known among his devotees.

Hrishikesh: A holy place for Hindus on the river Ganges at the foothill of Himalayas, about 130 miles north of Delhi.

Ishvarakoti: A perfected soul born to deliver a special spiritual message to humanity.

Japa or Japam: Repetition of Lord's name or of a sacred formula called mantra taught to the disciple by the spiritual teacher.

Jayrambati: The ancestral village of the Holy Mother.

Jiva: The embodied soul, a living being, an ordinary person.

Jnana: Pronounced as 'gyana'. Knowledge of Supreme Reality or Brahman arrived at through reasoning and discrimination.

Jnana Yoga: Pronounced as Gyana Yoga. Knowledge of Supreme Reality or Brahman arrived at through reasoning and discrimination. Also the process of reasoning by means of which the Ultimate Truth is realized. A person following the path of Jnana Yoga is called a **jnani** (pronounced as 'gyani').

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Kali: One of the names of the Divine Mother.

Kaliyuga: The last of the four yugas. According to the Hindu mythology, the universe passes through four yugas (cycles or periods): Satya, Treta, Dwapara, and Kali, the first being the Golden Age of truth, virtue, and righteousness that diminishes in each succeeding period, and the last being age of vice and total lack of virtue. The world is considered to be passing now through the Kaliyuga.

Kamarpukur: The ancestral village of Sri Ramakrishna.

Kapila: The sage who lived before the time of Buddha, is generally regarded as the founder of the Samkhya philosophy, one of the six systems of Indian philosophies.

Karma Yoga: Karma means action, in general, or duty. Karma Yoga is a spiritual discipline, mainly discussed in the Bhagavad Gita, based upon unselfish performance of duty without aspiring for results.

Kirtan: Devotional music, often accompanied by dancing.

Kshatravirya: Manliness of a warrior.

Kundalini: The spiritual energy lying dormant in all individuals. This energy is manifested by the practice of Yoga discipline.

Kurukshetra: A holy place, 30 miles north of Delhi where during a battle between two clans in ancient India the dialog of the Bhagavad-Gita took place.

'M': Mahendranath Gupta, one of the householder disciples of Sri Ramakrishna; and recorder of the original Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna in Bengali, wrote under the pen name of 'M'. A teacher by profession, 'M' was often addressed by Sri Ramakrishna and others as 'master'.

Mahabharata: The Hindu epic; the Bhagavad-Gita is part of this epic.

Mahamaya: The Great Illusionist; a name of Kali, the Divine Mother. See also maya.

Malaya Breeze: According to an ancient belief in India, the breeze blowing from the legendary Malaya mountains turns all trees and plants that have a core into sandalwood.

Mahapurush Maharaj: Swami Shivananda (1854-1934), a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna who was popularly known by this name. Mahapurush means 'great soul' and Swamis are also addressed as Maharaj, which literally means 'a great king' or 'emperor'.

Maharaj: Swami Brahmananda (1863-1922), a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna who was popularly known by this name. Sometimes Swamis are also addressed as Maharaj, which literally means 'a great king' or 'emperor'.

MahaSamadhi: Total absorption or communion with God, the final journey—beatitude from which the mind never returns.

Mantra: Sacred word by which a spiritual teacher initiates his disciple; Vedic Hymn; sacred word in general.

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Math: Monastery.

Maya: Ignorance obscuring the vision of God, the inherent creative power in Godhead or Brahman through which the visible universe is manifested. We are in spiritual blindness because of the maya.

Nachiketa: The legendary character of the Katha Upanishad, the young student and the embodiment of one-pointed love of truth, who is taught by Yama, the king of Death about the mystery of life and death.

Nahabat: Music tower—a small octagonal building, the first floor room of which was the Holy Mother's residence during her stay at the Dakshineshwar temple gardens.

Om: According to the Vedas, the most sacred of all words, out of which emanated the universe. The symbol of both the personal God and the Brahman or Absolute. **Om** is regarded by Hindus as the greatest mantra being of incalculable spiritual potency.

Paramatma: The Supreme Soul or Brahman.

Prakriti: Primordial Nature, which in association with Purusha, creates the universe.

Prana: The vital breadth, which sustains life in a physical body; the primal energy or force, of which other physical forces are manifestations.

Pranayam: Control of the prana, or the vital breath. One of the eight limbs of Patanjali's Yoga system; consists of certain breathing exercises that should be practised under the supervision of an experienced teacher, and only by those who lead an absolutely chaste life.

Prasad or Prasadam: Food or drink that has been offered to the Deity; also the leavings of a superior's meal.

Pravrajika: Pronounced prav-ra-jika. Title of a Hindu nun. See Sannyasini.

Purana: Hindu mythology.

Purusha: The eternal Conscious Principle of the Samkhya Philosophy, the Absolute.

Purusakara: Self-reliance.

Rajas: The principle of activity and restlessness in nature; one of the three gunas (attributes), or constitutive elements of any phenomenon. Rajasic is pertaining to rajas.

Raja Yoga: The spiritual exercises based on the Yoga system of philosophy, ascribed to Patanjali, is one of the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy, that deals with the realization of Brahman through the control of mind.

Ramayana: One of the two most popular Hindu epics the other being Mahabharata.

Rama or Ramachandra: The hero of the HIndu epic Ramayana; regarded by Hindus as a Divine Incarnation (avatara).

Rishi: A seer of Truth to whom the wisdom of Vedas was revealed; a general name for a saint or ascetic.

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Sadhaka: An aspirant devoted to the practice of spiritual discipline.

Sadhana: Spiritual discipline.

Sadhu: A holy man, ascetic, or monk.

Samadhi or Bhava Samadhi: Super conscious state. Through spiritual practice when the mind is perfectly concentrated, one transcends the limitations of the conscious state and gets the vision of Truth or Illumination—simply stated, gets the vision of God.

Samkhya: One of the six systems of orthodox Hindu thought or Indian philosophy that accept the authority of Vedas. The other five are Vaisheshika, Nyaya, Yoga, Mimasa, and Vedanta. Scholars believe that these six systems of thoughts originated and evolved roughly between 600 and 200 BC.

Samsara: The world, worldliness.

Sanskrit: The ancient language of the Vedas, Vedanta and other scriptures of India.

Sannyasi (M) or Sannyasini (F): An ascetic mendicant.

Sannyas: The last of the four stages of human life prescribed by the Vedantic scriptures:

1. Brahmacharya—the celibate student stage
2. Garhasthya—the married householder stage
3. Banaprastha—the stage of retirement and contemplation
4. Sannyas—the stage of religious mendicancy

Saraswati: The goddess of learning according to Hindu mythology.

Sat-Chit-Ananda: Lit., Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. Another name of the Ultimate or Supreme Reality or Brahman.

Sattva or sattwa: The quality of tranquility, purity, virtue, illumination, balance and wisdom; one of the three gunas (attributes), or constitutive elements of any phenomenon. Sattvic is pertaining to sattva.

Shakti or Shakti: Literally means STRENGTH. The Creative Power of Brahman; name of the Divine Mother. Those who worship Shakti, or the Divine Mother are called Saktas.

Shankaracharya or Shankara: The seventh century prophet, philosopher, and the unrivalled propounder of Advaita, or non-dualistic Vedanta philosophy.

Shiva or Shiva: The Destroyer God; the Third of the Hindu Trinity, the other two being Brahma (Creator) and Vishnu (Preserver).

Sri or Shri: A title or designation prefixed to the name of a person, particularly a holy person.

Sri Krishna or Krishna: According to Hinduism one of the Avatars who taught the Bhagavad-Gita.

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Shraddha: Faith and reverence.

Sri Ramakrishna: Pronounced as rama—krish—na.

Sri Ramakrishna, a great prophet of nineteenth-century India (1836-1886), practiced all major religions and re-established the fundamental teaching of Vedanta and unequivocally declared:

1. All religions are True
2. Our true nature is Divine, and
3. The only aim of human life is to manifest and realize that divinity

See Sri Ramakrishna and The Ramakrishna Movement.

Sutra: Aphorism—a brief statement of a principle, a clue.

Swami: A title of the Hindu monks or great ascetics.

Swami Vivekananda: Pronounced as vive—ka—nanda.

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), (addressed also as Swamiji), formerly Narendranath Dutta, the foremost monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, was the first Vedanta teacher to the West who lectured and taught Vedanta in USA and Europe. He founded the Vedanta Society of New York in 1894 and established the Ramakrishna Order in Belur (India) in 1899.

Tagore: Sir Rabindranath Tagore (1861—1941). Bengali writer who won the 1913 Nobel Prize for literature.

Tamas: The principle of dullness or inertia in nature; one of the three gunas (attributes), or constitutive elements of any phenomenon. Tamasic is pertaining to tamas.

Tapasya: Austerity, asceticism or severe self-discipline.

Tarakeswar: The Temple of Shiva at Tarakeshwar is a holy place for Hindus. It's about 30 miles from Calcutta, midway between Kamarpukur and Jayrambati.

Tathagata: One of the names by which Gautama Buddha is known; the word also conveys the sense of a "Messiah".

Upanishads or Upanishads: One of the three sacred texts of the Vedanta and the Yoga philosophy (the other two being the Brahma-Sutra, and the Bhagavad-Gita), Upanishads are the concluding portions or the culmination of the Vedas. One hundred and eight Upanishads exist, each ranging in length from a few verses to several hundred verses—of these ten are considered to be the principal Upanishads. These are: Katha, Isha, Kena, Prasna, Mundaka, *Mandukya*, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chandogya, and Brihadaranyaka.

Vaishnava: Member of an dualistic sect of India.

Vedanta: A 2500 years old philosophy from India based on Vedas. See What is Vedanta?

Vedantist: A follower of the principles of Vedanta.

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Vedas: The ancient and most sacred scriptures of Hinduism that date back to 2500 B.C. There are four Vedas: Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva.

Virat: The Spirit in the form of the universe; the All pervading Spirit.

Vishnu: The Preserver God; the Second of the Hindu Trinity, the other two being Brahma (Creator) and Shiva (Destroyer).

Yoga: Union of the individual soul and the Supreme Soul or Brahman. Simply stated, yoga includes the *spiritual exercises or disciplines* (Ref: Upanishads, Bhagavad-Gita, and Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms) to realize God. Vedanta identifies four kinds of yoga: Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Raja Yoga.

The so-called yoga being popularized these days, especially in the Western countries as physical postures and relaxation exercises, is in fact "hatha yoga" that has nothing to do with yoga.

Yoga-Sutra: Patanjali's (c. 400 B.C.) Yoga aphorisms.

Yogi: The person who practices yoga.

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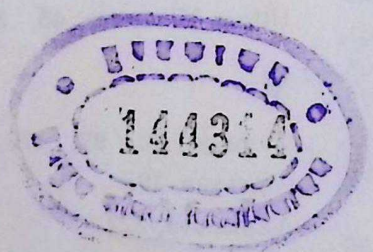

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